



**14 MAR**

**4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT**

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION **15-20 MAR**



## PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

### READ

So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. (Colossians 1:9-14 NLT)

### REFLECT

This is Paul's prayer for the church at Colosse. As you read it, remember that he was in prison, probably a house arrest situation, unable to move around freely or do what he wanted to do. Since he couldn't visit in person, he did what he could do – he wrote a letter. Try to picture the scene: Paul in prison, pen in hand ... now, what should he write? He wrote a prayer, asking God to give the Colossians knowledge of God's will, wisdom and understanding. He asked God to give them strength, endurance and patience. He prayed that they would be filled with joy and thanksgiving.

Here's what he didn't do – he didn't give them a list of instructions about things they had to do. The outcomes (bearing good fruit, walking in the light, being filled with joy) are not things they had to produce by their own effort. They were natural outcomes of the work of God in their lives. They are natural outcomes of the work of God in our lives as well.

### REACT

Today is a good day to practice intercessory prayer. As Paul prayed for the Colossians, you can pray for the friends or family member you can't be with right now. Try using the Lord's Prayer as a model, going slowly through the phrases and applying them to the people for whom you are praying. Prayer for others is an act of great love!



## A NEW SONG

### READ

I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him. Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare. (Psalm 40:1-5)

### REFLECT

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Walter Brueggeman puts Psalm 40 in a collection he calls “psalms of reorientation.” They’re songs to be sung after a great crisis has passed, after the Lord has delivered the singer from a challenging situation. They remind us that, even for people of faith, things will not always be rosy and bright. These kinds of psalms do two things. They acknowledge the slimy pits, mud and mire that life on earth will inevitably bring us to. But they also remind us that God will bring us through those things. He will set our feet on solid ground once again. He will give us new – maybe less naïve, more mature, more real – songs to sing.

That is not to make light of or gloss over the current situation. Many people are suffering right now. The emotions you are experiencing are real. There’s no need to deny them. You may indeed be oriented toward fear or doubt or anger right now.

But faith is real too. This psalm begins with the singer crying out to God for help. That is itself an action of faith. It may be the action you want or need to take today. It may very well be the beginning of your new song.

## REACT

Psalm writing isn't confined to the Bible. People of faith have always turned to writing to capture their questions, thoughts and feelings. Some of those have become our favorite hymns. Even if you're not a poet, today might be a good day to spend a little time writing out your thoughts and feelings in a personal psalm or prayer. Here are a couple of prompts to help you get started:

How do you feel about what is happening around you and in you right now?

What do you want to say to God about it?

What specific grief or fear or doubt or request do you want to express to God?

What do you want Him to do for you?

What can you praise Him for even now?



## STAYING CONNECTED

### READ

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:19-25)

### REFLECT

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This passage is very plural. The truths are not individual, but communal: WE have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place; Jesus is the new and living way for US; WE have a great high priest.

The instructions are likewise communal: Let US hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess; Let US consider how to spur each on toward love and good deeds;

Let US not give up on meeting together; Let US encourage one another.

The passage is perfect to read for anytime if we need to exercise the Christian love towards one another. We should remember that we need each other now more than ever. We are challenged by this passage and by the time we live in to take care of each other, to encourage each other, to find meaningful ways of connecting with each other. Whatever challenges we face at a special moment in life, we have a great high priest who is praying for us and we have each other. That is enough.

## REACT

Wat can you do today to give hope, build faith, show love? How are you staying connected to your faith community? Have you checked on others in that community to make sure they're staying connected?



## WAIT ON GOD

### READ

Help, God—the bottom has fallen out of my life! Master, hear my cry for help!

Listen hard! Open your ears! Listen to my cries for mercy. If you, God, kept records on wrongdoings, who would stand a chance? As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit, and that's why you're worshiped. I pray to God—my life a prayer— and wait for what he'll say and do. My life's on the line before God, my Lord, waiting and watching till morning, waiting and watching till morning. O Israel, wait and watch for God—with God's arrival comes love, with God's arrival comes generous redemption. No doubt about it—he'll redeem Israel, buy back Israel from captivity to sin. (Psalm 130, MSG)

### REFLECT

This psalm gives us three actions to take when we feel like the bottom has fallen out of our lives: praying, waiting, and watching.

In prayer, we ask God to listen to us, to pay attention to us, to give us more than an absentminded “uh huh, I hear you” response. We ask for help, we ask for mercy, we ask for forgiveness. We ask Him to act on our behalf because we are confident – we know – He will answer.

When we wait on God, we are looking for Him with hope and expectation. We wait actively, not passively. It's like waiting for a beloved person to get off an airplane. You check the arrival board to see how much longer until you see them. You stand on tiptoe, scanning the faces and looking for that one you know will bring you joy. That is how we wait on God, especially in times of crisis and need.

Watching in this context has to do with remembering and anticipating at the same time. When we watch, we call to mind all the times God has answered and helped us in the past, and we look forward to the time when He will do it again.

We do these things not just with words but with our whole lives. We pray, we wait, we watch for our God who generously loves and redeems His people.

## **REACT**

Today, set aside a few intentional minutes to pray, wait and watch. What memories of His past work do you want to savor? What is He saying to you now? What doubts do you want to confess? What needs to be redeemed? What hopes do you want to place in God's hands today?



## YOU ARE MY GOD

### READ

Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors and an object of dread to my closest friends—those who see me on the street flee from me. I am forgotten as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery. For I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side!" They conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. (Psalm 130)

### REFLECT

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As we move closer to Good Friday and the cross, the daily scripture readings get heavier. This psalm names some strong emotions that may sound familiar to you today:

I am in distress  
 I am tired  
 I feel weak  
 I feel abandoned  
 I feel forgotten  
 I feel broken  
 I hear whispers of scary things

But, as psalms of lament do, it also makes powerful statements of faith:  
 You are my God  
 My times (even this time) are in Your hands  
 You are able to deliver me  
 Your love is unfailing

Both lists are true and valid things to feel. Every one of them can be the beginning of a prayer.

## **REACT**

"Take it to the Lord in prayer," is good advice. Whatever you're thinking or feeling or doing today, take it to the Lord in prayer. Don't be afraid to tell Him how you really feel. He's heard it from His people before.



## CHRIST IS HERE

### READ

Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (John 12:1-3)

### REFLECT

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This little dinner party happens after Lazarus was raised from the dead (John 11). It's worth imagining the characters because they show us three postures toward Jesus.

Picture Martha with her apron on, serving the food, taking care of everyone. Lazarus is reclining at the table, relaxing and enjoying the meal and the company of his friend Jesus. Mary waits for the perfect moment to bring out her treasured perfume and pour it on Jesus as an act of extravagant worship.

Serving, resting, worshipping – how will you experience Jesus today?

You may be deployed in disaster services, serving meals and taking care of people in your community. Jesus is there with you.

You may be finding yourself rather isolated from others, away from your family, your Corps, Jesus is there with you.

You may even have the luxury of taking a holy nap this afternoon. Jesus is there with you then too.

### REACT

Whatever you are doing today – worshipping, resting, or serving – make it a sincere offering to God. Ask Him to help you be especially aware of His presence as you go through your day. You might be surprised by the ways He will answer that prayer!