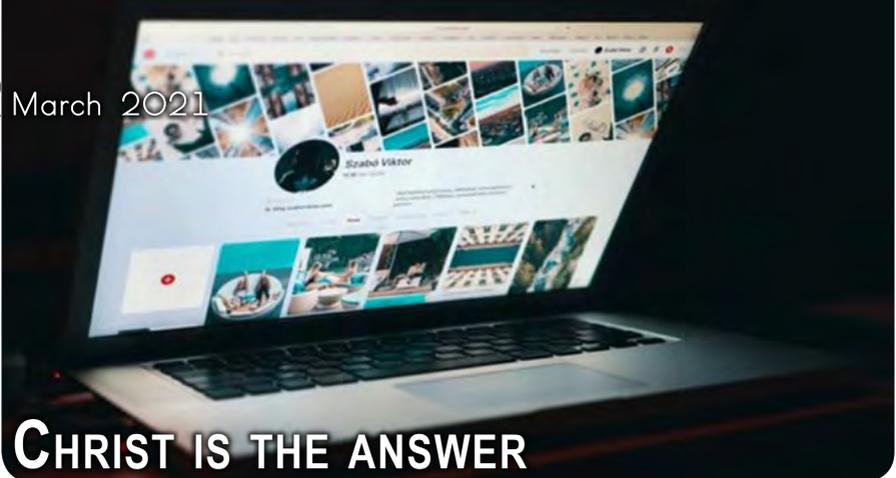




**21 MAR**

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

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION **22-27 MAR**



# CHRIST IS THE ANSWER

## READ

Answer me quickly, Lord;  
my spirit fails.  
Do not hide your face from me  
or I will be like those who go down to the pit.  
Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,  
for I have put my trust in you.  
Show me the way I should go,  
for to you I entrust my life.  
Rescue me from my enemies, Lord,  
for I hide myself in you.  
Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God;  
may your good Spirit  
lead me on level ground. (Psalm 143:7-10)

## REFLECT

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If you are like most people, you are probably watching or hearing more news reports than usual. It's almost impossible not to be overwhelmed by broadcasts, articles, videos, projections, and social media posts. As soon as you wake up in the morning, the reports start rolling in and they don't let up.

In the midst of all the news reports and rumors, the ancient prayers/songs of the Bible seem more relevant than ever. This psalm gives us some simple, timely prayers:

Let THIS morning bring me a deep awareness of God's unfailing love

Show me the way to go  
Rescue me  
Teach me  
Lead me

## **REACT**

Does one of those prayers resonate with you today? Breathe it as your simplest, most faithful prayer today.



## HIS PLAN

### READ

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

### REFLECT

God has a plan. God has always had a plan. God still has a plan. These statements are always true and always good to remember. When life gets chaotic, they are even more important.

Here’s another truth – we are part of His plan. It’s right there in the last verse. We are God’s handiwork. We are being shaped, day by day, more and more, into the image of Christ. As we become more like Him, we are enabled and empowered to do the kind of good works He did and still does. This passage highlights mercy, kindness and grace as specific categories of God’s work in and through us.

Mercy is seeing others as Jesus sees them and reaching out in helpful ways because of it. It is not theoretical, but practical. Kindness is a combination of gentleness and goodness. We interact with and serve people gently because we have experienced the goodness of God. Grace, the completely undeserved love of God toward us,

completely transforms us and compels us to become agents of transformation. This is God's plan for us and for the world around us. Especially when the world is chaotic and needy.

## **REACT**

If you're serving others on a daily basis, you will be confronted with plenty of opportunities for mercy, kindness, and grace. Be faithful as you serve Him by serving others. If you're unable to serve that way, you might have to do a little of your own planning. What acts of mercy can you do today? How can you show the kind heart of Jesus to someone? What gracious action can you take toward your family, your friends, your neighbors today?

24 March 2021



# HOPE

## READ

Yet I still dare to hope  
when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends  
His mercies never cease.  
Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.  
I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!"  
The Lord is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him.  
So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. (Lamentations 3:21-26, NLT)

## REFLECT

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There are times when hope is the bravest thing you can do. This is one of those times. We can quietly wait in hope because we know the faithful love of the Lord which never ends. We have experienced His mercies. We trust His goodness. We wait in hope for the inheritance He has for us.

## REACT

Hope is an act of resistance to the fear and despair around us. Be brave enough today to tell yourself, and maybe someone else, "Yet still I dare to hope in the Lord."



## PEOPLE YOU CARE

### READ

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-8, NLT)

### REFLECT

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I've been thinking a lot about Paul. Many, if not most, of his letters were written because he was unable to be with the people to whom they were addressed. At least four of them, including this one, were actually written while he was under house arrest. Maybe that's why this opening paragraph is so heartfelt. Maybe it will remind all of us to not take each other for granted ever again.

As you read this lovely greeting, go slowly enough for the faces of the people you are missing right now to come to mind. As you think of them, let Paul's prayers for the Philippians become your prayer for them.

### REACT

Who came to your mind as you read? At the very least, say a prayer for them today. Better still, write your own epistle - a little note is enough - to encourage and let them know they have a special place in your heart.

26 March 2021



**WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER**

### READ

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it. (Philippians 1:27-30, NLT)

### REFLECT

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We are in this struggle together.

Those words were true when Paul wrote them to his first-century audience. They are still true. We who belong to Christ also belong to each other. We are confronted with the needs of our communities and working overtime to meet them in new ways. We are being challenged every day to live as citizens of heaven in a world that seems to have changed overnight. We might be socially and physically distanced, but we are not alone.

We are in this struggle together.

### REACT

Pray for each other.



## LET'S FOLLOW HIM

### READ

They were now on the way up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were filled with awe, and the people following behind were overwhelmed with fear. Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus once more began to describe everything that was about to happen to him. "Listen," he said, "we're going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die and hand him over to the Romans. They will mock him, spit on him, flog him with a whip, and kill him, but after three days he will rise again. (Mark 10:32-34, NLT)

### REFLECT

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Jesus, the disciples, and the crowd were heading to Jerusalem. Most of them didn't know what was going to happen. The disciples were in awe, maybe hoping that this was the time that Jesus would reveal Himself as the Messiah. The crowd was fearful, maybe anticipating resistance or even violence if He did.

Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen. He described it in great detail to the disciples - betrayal, arrest, trial, mocking, pain, and the cross were waiting for Him there.

And still He went ahead of them. He always does. When we follow Him, whatever that means for us and wherever that takes us, He always goes first.

### REACT

If you're struggling with difficult or confusing emotions, try the palms down-palms up method of prayer. Begin by holding out your hands with palms down as a symbolic gesture of surrendering your fear or worry or frustration to God. Be honest about how you're feeling and your desire to release those things to God. When you're ready, turn your palms up as a symbol that you're ready to receive God's help and peace. Even if you can't find the words, sitting in open-handed silence is a perfectly good way to pray.