

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

A GUIDE THROUGH LENT

*Preparing your heart for
the beauty of the cross.*

PASTOR MARTY CATES



What is Lent?

Lent is a season that can be puzzling and unsettling to many people. Among Protestant Christian communities, Lent is often either a graceless, unforgiving, and legalistic season of the year, a trivial time to try your “spiritualized diet” by giving up sweets, soda, etc., or a season that is entirely swept under the rug as something that “those other folks do.” None of these concepts, though, truly characterize what Lent is.

Lent is the third season of the Christian year and, other than Easter Sunday, it is probably the oldest. We know from early church records that Lent predates both Advent and Christmas. Since the early church, it has been a season of preparation for the celebration on the Sunday of Sundays; Easter. During the forty-day period of Lent we turn our hearts to the Suffering Servant and his journey toward the Cross.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (forty days before Easter, excluding Sundays as they are always days of feasting; a mini-Easter in many ways) and culminates during Holy Week, which moves from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

The church has long used Lent as a season to deepen the regular practices of the Christian life: repentance, prayer, fasting, charity, and acts of love and service toward others. Lent is, in many ways, like an annual physical for our spiritual lives in which, instead of checking for cholesterol levels or admitting we aren't working out like we should, we ask the questions of the heart like:

- What patterns of sin have entrenched themselves in my life?
- What idols have taken root in my heart?
- How can I pray and repent of these things?
- How has my love for God and neighbor grown stale or selfish?
- Where have I sought my comfort and fulfillment in created things instead of the creator?
- What does the death and resurrection of Jesus mean to me in my day-to-day life, right now?

Over the next few weeks, as we ask those questions and fill our days with the regular practices of faith, maintaining time each day for meditating on God's Word, praying, and practicing the discipline of fasting (either whole days and/or certain meals) that we will learn to do so with a joyful spirit. Doing this reminds us that we do not live by bread alone, "but by every word that comes from the Mouth of the Lord."

Each day of this guide is set up to help you on the journey through Lent by providing Scripture readings, prayers, and the occasional musical selection to help remind you of who you are and of your Union with Christ in His life, death, and resurrection. It is my hope that as we approach Easter that the Holy Spirit, through these practices, will make even more clear the beauty of the Cross and God's grace.

Day 1 - Ash Wednesday

Read:

Psalm 25

Genesis 3:8-13

Prayer:

Ash Wednesday has traditionally been a day of contrition and repentance in the church. A day that we take a page from Job and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:6.) While we are not having an Ash Wednesday service, it is nonetheless a day we can devote to repenting and remembering the brevity of this life. Spend time today in prayer repenting to God and seeking out those you need to ask forgiveness of.

Day 2 - Thursday

Read:

Psalm 22

Acts 3:19-20

2 Peter 3:8-9

Prayer:

Repent as it is used in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *metanoēō*, meaning to change one's mind, to turn from sin. "Repent and turn back," Peter said to the crowd at the temple, after the lame man went out healed and leaping, "so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19.) Pray for repentance and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

Day 3 - Friday

Read:

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Exodus 20:1-17

2 Peter 3:8-9

Prayer:

Spend time today praying and thanking God for His law. Thanking him for the fulfillment of His Law found in Christ Jesus. Pray for justice to prevail in the face

of injustice in our community, state, nation, and world. Pray for our leaders, that they would fear the Lord and seek to enact just laws and statutes.

Day 4 - Saturday

Read:

Psalm 114

Mark 2:18-28

Prayer:

Pray today thanking God for Sovereignty and Providential Care. Pray for those that are sick, injured, lonely, depressed, grieving, and suffering within our congregation, in our community, and around the world. Pray that they would know the comfort of the Sovereign God.

Week Two

Day 5 - Monday

Read:

Psalm 51

John 12:20-33

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer today rejoicing over the goodness of God, and asking Him to give you a heart that tastes and sees His goodness. Pray for the lost in your community and the witness of the church to them. Pray for those who walk as enemies of the cross, that they would be humbled, repent, and believe. Pray for your own hard heartedness and lack of trust in the saving work of Jesus.

Day 6 - Tuesday

Read:

Psalm 118

John 12:12-19

Prayer:

Spend time praying today rejoicing that God is a covenant keeping God, who is slow to anger and steadfast in His love. Pray for the local church, for its

leaders, and for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for the persecuted church, that they might know the riches of God's promises and the hope of Christ Jesus.

Day 7 - Wednesday

Read:

Psalm 119:33-64

Mark 5:21-43

Prayer:

Pray for the courage to take up your cross and follow Jesus. Pray for the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in your life, and that God would be revealing to you the places that you have been reluctant to give over to him. Pray for the lost in our community, that they would see their sin, flee from it, and place their faith in Christ.

Day 8 - Thursday

Read:

Psalm 119:97-128

Mark 8:22-9:1

Prayer:

Pray today for a Christ-like heart, a heart that is gentle and lowly. Pray that as you are made low, that Christ is lifted high. Pray for your coworkers, your family, and friends, that they would know the love of Christ. Pray that your love and service to those around you would make Christ known and glorified.

Day 9 - Friday

Read:

Psalm 119:65-96

Ephesians 2:1-10

Prayer:

Praise God for the riches of Christ Jesus, rejoicing at the inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading being held for us in heaven. Pray for those in need of comfort, those that are suffering, lonely, depressed, anxious,

and fearful, that they would know the comfort and peace of God.

Day 10 - Saturday

Read:

Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Prayer:

Praise God for His word. Pray that you might find it sweeter than honey, that you might love it and cherish it. Pray that God would give you a desire for His word and that He would open your heart to it. Pray that the Spirit might use His word to shape you and grow you in Christlikeness. Pray that we as a church would remain committed to God's word and hold it forth for the world.

Week Three

Day 11 - Monday

Read:

Psalm 111

Ezra 3

Prayer:

Praise God that Jesus is the cornerstone upon which our faith is built. Praise him that it is not your work, craftsmanship, or ingenuity that your faith is dependent on, but that it is dependent on Christ alone. Pray for a heart that knows the preciousness of the cross. Pray today for our community, for students, teachers, and school administrators. Pray that in this season, the Holy Spirit might be calling many unto salvation.

Day 12 - Tuesday

Read:

Psalm 125

John 16:16-33

Prayer:

Pray today thanking God for Sovereignty and Providential Care. Pray for those that are sick, injured, lonely, depressed, grieving, and suffering within our

congregation, in our community, and around the world. Pray that they would know the comfort of the Sovereign God.

Day 13 - Wednesday

Read:

Psalm 121

Job 14:1-14

Prayer:

Praise God that you are found in Christ. Praise Him that your identity is not rooted in your own feelings, experiences, and actions but instead is rooted in the finished work of Christ. Pray that you would find freedom in that truth, and would stop living for the approval of others. Pray that you would begin to live in the freedom the Gospel has freely given to you.

Day 14 - Thursday

Read:

Psalm 113

Isaiah 49:1-7

Prayer:

Pray today thanking God for his sovereignty, wisdom, and power. Rejoice that he ordains all things; even kings and kingdoms rise and fall by his decree. Rejoice that all will one day bow at the name of Jesus and confess him as Lord. Pray today for the persecuted church around the world, that the Lord in his mercy would free them from the suffering and pain they experience. Pray that we as the church would be a people who seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Day 15 - Friday

Read:

Psalm 123

Hebrews 9:11-15

Today's prayer is taken from Wang Mindao (1900-1991) of China. Wang was a pastor known for his refusal to compromise with the secular authorities, which resulted in his imprisonment (1955-1980).

Prayer:

Even in the troubled days of our life we should still praise him. Thank the Lord for saving us, for calling us. Thank the Lord that in the midst of difficult times we are still alive. Thank the Lord for bestowing upon us all kinds of spiritual blessings. Thank the Lord for bestowing upon us hope and trust in him. Thank the Lord for bestowing upon us comfort and joy. Thank the Lord for bestowing upon us the strength to endure hardship. Thank the Lord that he has not treated us according to our sins. Thank the Lord for his promise to bestow on us a heavenly eternal home, a kingdom that can never be shaken, and incomparable, everlasting glory. Be thankful that by the grace of our Lord Jesus we can go calmly and without fear into the presence of God, we can receive forgiveness, and the blessing of his mercy, his help and protection at all times. If we have truly learned to "give thanks in all circumstances," then even in times of trouble we will never feel the slightest hardship.

Day 16 - Saturday**Read:**

Psalm 135

Hebrews 5:5-10

Prayer:

Pray for the courage to take up your cross and follow Jesus. Pray for the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in your life, and that God would be revealing to you the places that you have been reluctant to give over to him. Pray for the lost in our community today that they would see their sin, flee from it, and place their faith in Christ.

*Week Four***Day 17 - Monday****Read:**

Psalm 122

Mark 12:1-27

Prayer:

God, I am bought with a price. Give me eyes to see how great that price is. Let the reality of your sacrifice sink deep into my heart. Help me to allow Jesus to be even more than my Savior, but my Lord as well, Lord of all my life.

Song (For Musical Reflection):

He Giveth Grace by The Pilgrim Project

Lyrics:

He giveth more grace when the burden grows greater, He sendeth more strength when the labors increase, To added affliction He addeth His mercy, To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

Chorus:

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His pow'r has no boundary known unto men,
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.
When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

Day 18 - Tuesday

Read:

Psalm 120

Isaiah 42:1-9

Prayer:

Spend time today praising the work of the Holy Spirit in creation and in the coming of the new creation. Praise the Spirit for the peace and power that upholds you when all else fails. Pray asking for help to follow the example of Jesus.

Day 19 - Wednesday

Read:

Psalm 134

John 15:1-17

Prayer:

Spend time today praising God for His steadfast, loving kindness, patience, and pursuit of you. Repent of those times you have not shown love to those in your life, and ask God for the fruit of the Holy Spirit to be made manifest in your life; that you might grow in love for those you find difficult to love.

Day 20 - Thursday

Read:

Psalm 36

Isaiah 50:4-9

A prayer historically attributed to St. Augustine.

Prayer:

Look upon us, O Lord,
and let all the darkness of our souls
vanish before the beams of thy brightness.
Fill us with holy love,
and open to us the treasures of thy wisdom.
All our desire is known unto thee,
therefore perfect what thou hast begun,
and what thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer.
We seek thy face,
turn thy face unto us and show us thy glory.
Then shall our longing be satisfied,
and our peace shall be perfect.

Day 21 - Friday

Read:

Psalm 129

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer today rejoicing in the goodness of God, and asking Him to give you a heart that tastes and sees his goodness. Pray for the lost in your community and for the witness of the church to them. Pray for those who walk as enemies of the cross, that they would be humbled, repent, and believe. Pray for your own hard heartedness and lack of trust in the saving work of Jesus.

Day 22 - Saturday

Read:

Psalm 115

1 John 2:1-3

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we have the privilege of surveying your cross, lamenting our sin, and resting in your righteousness. For your glory and our growth, we ask you to drown us with fresh grace. Convince us again that we are much more loved than we believe possible. Jesus, melt us in your mercies and overwhelm us with your love. Astonish us with your goodness, and let your goodness lead us to repentance.

Week Five

Day 23 - Monday

Read:

Psalm 71

1 Corinthians 18:26-31

Prayer:

Pray today praising God that Jesus is the cornerstone upon which our faith is built; praising Him that it is not your work, craftsmanship, or ingenuity that your faith is dependent on but that it is dependent on Christ alone. Pray for a heart that knows the preciousness of the cross. Pray today for our community; for our

students, teachers, and school administrators. Pray that in this season the Holy Spirit might be calling many unto salvation.

Day 24 - Tuesday

Read:

Psalm 112

Hebrews 10:16-25

Prayer:

Pray today rejoicing and thanking God for the gift of His Word. Rejoicing that in His Word He reveals to us His love for His people, and all that is necessary for salvation. Praise Him for the Word incarnate, that in Jesus we are given the grace that reconciles us to God and experience the mercy of our loving heavenly father. Pray for a heart that knows the preciousness of the cross.

Day 25 - Wednesday

Read:

Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Prayer:

Pray today praising God for the riches of Christ Jesus, rejoicing at the inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading being held for us in heaven. Pray for those in need of comfort, those that are suffering, lonely, depressed, anxious, and fearful that they would know the comfort and peace of God.

Day 26 - Thursday

Read:

Psalm 126

Genesis 9:8-17

Prayer:

Pray today rejoicing that God truly is faithful and praising God that He never gives up on you. Whether you're just coming to God with new heartache, struggle, or temptations, or you've been waiting on His deliverance for some

time, approach His throne with the confidence that He hears you and will answer you. The God who left heaven to pursue you and rose from the pit to redeem you has not forgotten you.

Day 27 - Friday

Read:

Psalm 132

Jeremiah 14:1-9

Today's prayer is a poem by Joesphine D. Henderson Heard

Prayer:

My God, sometimes I cannot Pray,
Nor can I tell why thus I weep;
The words my heart has framed I cannot say,
Behold me prostrate at Thy feet.
Thou understandest all my woe;
Thou know'st the craving of my soul -
Thine eye beholdeth wheresoe'er I go;
Thou canst this wounded heart make whole.
And oh! while prostrate here I lie,
And groan the words I fain would speak:
Unworthy though I be, pass no me by,
But let Thy love in showers break.
And deluge all my thirsty soul,
And lay my proud ambition low;
So while time's billows o'er me roll,
I shall be washed as white as snow.
Thou wilt not quench the smoke flax,
Nor wilt thou break the bruised reed;
Like potter's clay, or motle wax,
Mould me to suit Thy will indeed.

Day 28 - Saturday

Read:

Psalm 128

Jeremiah 12:1-12

Prayer:

Pray today thanking God for His sovereignty, wisdom, and power. Pray rejoicing that He ordains all things and that even kings and kingdoms rise and fall by his decree. All will one day bow at the name of Jesus and confess Him as Lord. Pray today for the persecuted church around the world, that the Lord in His mercy would free them from the suffering and pain they experience. Pray that we as the church would be a people who seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Week Six

Day 29 - Monday

Read:

Psalm 133

John 14:25-31

Prayer:

Praise God for Jesus, our perfect Savior. Rejoice that Jesus is our peace and hope. Ask for strength and wisdom for how to bring the hope and peace of Christ Jesus into your life and relationships. Pray you would not be passive, but passionately serve our King with your thoughts, words, and deeds leaving in our wake an aroma of Heaven, the scent of the Gospel. Pray that God would fill your heart with grace, and that through the Spirit you might flee from malice, anger, impatience and every sin.

Day 30 - Tuesday

Read:

Psalm 139

John 17:20-26

Prayer:

Rejoice over the goodness of God, and ask Him to give you a heart that tastes

and sees His goodness. Pray for the lost in your community and the witness of the church to them. Pray for those who walk as enemies of the cross, that they would be humbled, repent, and believe. Pray for your own hard heartedness and lack of trust in the saving work of Jesus.

Day 31 - Wednesday

Read:

Psalm 88

Hebrews 5:5-10

Prayer:

Praise God for the riches of Christ Jesus. Rejoice at the inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading being held for us in heaven. Pray for those in need of comfort; those that are suffering, lonely, depressed, anxious, and fearful that they would know the comfort and peace of God.

Day 32 - Thursday

Read:

Psalm 127

Hebrews 12:1-3

Prayer:

Praise God that Jesus is the cornerstone upon which our faith is built. Praise Him that it is not your work, craftsmanship, or ingenuity that your faith is dependent on, but that it is dependent on Christ alone. Pray for a heart that knows the preciousness of the cross. Pray today for our community, for students, teachers, and school administrators. Pray that in this season the Holy Spirit might be calling many unto salvation.

Day 33 - Friday

Read:

Psalm 116

Hebrews 10:1-10

Prayer:

Spend time today praying and thanking God for His law. Thanking Him for the

fulfillment of His Law found in Christ Jesus. Pray for justice to prevail in the face of injustice in our community, state, nation, and world. Pray for our leaders, that they would fear the Lord and seek to enact just laws and statutes.

Day 34 - Saturday

Read:

Psalm 136

1 Corinthians 13

Prayer:

Rejoice that God is a covenant keeping God, who is slow to anger and steadfast in His love. Pray for the local church, for its leaders, and for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for the persecuted church that they might know the riches of God's promises and the hope of Christ Jesus.

Holy Week

This week marks the final week of Lent as we approach Easter Sunday and the victory over death proclaimed by the empty tomb. The scripture readings are longer this week than they have been throughout the rest of Lent, and are meant to lead us through the week leading up to Jesus's death. Each day there is a Psalm, Old Testament reading, and a New Testament reading along with a musical selection for the day. The prayer for each day is the same prayer and is found below. I hope this scripture reading and prayer guide has been a blessing to you over the last few weeks, and that it in many ways has brought to you greater love for God's word and zeal for prayer.

Prayer:

Lord God, You sent your Son into the world not to condemn the world but to save the world through Him. We rejoice in that good news, that You, Oh God, are slow to anger and steadfast in loving kindness. We pray that throughout this week we see more clearly that Your anger and wrath have been poured out upon Your Son, Jesus, who knew no sin but became sin that we might become Your righteousness.

We rejoice this week that Christ Jesus gave up the glories and riches of Heaven to draw near to us in our brokenness, suffering, temptation, and shame. He

came not to be served but to serve proclaiming the truth of the Kingdom to the World through His words and deeds. You had given all things into His hands. He had come from you, and was going to you, and yet He knelt down on the floor, and washed His friends' feet. He was their teacher and their Lord, the very Son of God, yet He washed their feet.

Lord God, help us to understand Your heart more fully, that we might take up our crosses and follow Jesus. Help us to do as He has done for us so that the world will know we are His disciples by our love for one another and for them. We confess we often don't love as Christ loved, and the world therefore does not know we are Yours. Keep before our eyes the image of Your Son, who, being God, became a Servant for our sake. Remind us again and again of Your grace that is sufficient for us. Remind us of the costliness of the Cross, which Christ endured for us and He is now seated at Your right hand. All glory be to Him who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Day 35 - Monday

Read:

Psalm 44

Isaiah 40:1-11

Matthew 21:12-22

Prayer:

Praise God that Jesus is the cornerstone upon which our faith is built. Praise Him that it is not your work, craftsmanship, or ingenuity that your faith is dependent on, but that it is dependent on Christ alone. Pray for a heart that knows the preciousness of the cross. Pray today for our community, for students, teachers, and school administrators. Pray that in this season the Holy Spirit might be calling many unto salvation.

Song:

Jerusalem by CityAlight

Day 36 - Tuesday

Read:

Psalm 60

Isaiah 61:1-3

John 12:37-50

Song:

My Jesus I Love Thee by Shane & Shane

Day 37 - Wednesday

Read:

Psalm 74

Isaiah 53:1-3

Matthew 26:6-16

Song:

Come Ye Sinners by Indelible Grace

Day 38 - Maundy Thursday

Read:

Psalm 79

Exodus 12:1-27

Matthew 26:17-75

Song:

Behold The Lamb by Passion

Day 39 - Good Friday

Read:

Psalm 80

Isaiah 53:4-12

John 18:28-19:42

Song:

Jesus Paid It All by Joey + Rory

Day 40 - Holy Saturday

Read:

Psalm 90

Jonah 2:1-9

Matthew 27:62-66

Song:

Lord From Sorrows Deep I Call by Keith & Kristyn Getty

Easter

Read:

Psalm 16

Genesis 22:9-14

Matthew 28:1-10

Song:

His Heart Beats by Andrew Peterson

For all music referenced in this devotional guide, search for Sycamore Presbyterian Church on Spotify and click on the Lent Devotional playlist or scan the code below:

