

DEVOTIONS FOR WEEK 2 OF LENT

Sunday, March 13

Isaiah 12:1-5 Thanksgiving and Praise

- 1**You will say on that day: I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, and you comforted me.
- 2** Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.
- 3** With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
- 4** And you will say on that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;
make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.
- 5** Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth.
- 6** Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah looks back on the disasters Israel suffered in the Babylonian captivity and sees them as evidence of God's anger. At the same time, he looks forward with thanksgiving for God's forgiveness and the longed-for restoration of Israel.

Reflect on the Following:

You may have known times when, as in the experience of ancient Israel, everything seemed against you. Did you pray? And if you did, how did you pray? How did you talk to God at a time like that?

From Prayers of the Bible for a Faithful Journey by Elizabeth Caldwell and Earle Hilgert

Monday, March 14

Luke 2:29-32

- 29** 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;
- 30** for my eyes have seen your salvation,
- 31** which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
- 32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

In this story, Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, bring him to the Temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated. This ceremony was not a baptism. Rather, Luke understands it to be a fulfillment of the law in Exodus 13:2 that every first-born male child was to be consecrated to the Lord.

While in the Temple the family encountered Simeon, a man to whom the Holy Spirit had revealed that he would not die until he had seen the longed-for Messiah. Recognizing the child Jesus as the fulfillment of his hopes, Simeon took Jesus into his arms and prayed the prayer found in Luke 2:29-32.

The prayer of Simeon has been used in the evening services of Christian churches for at least 1,500 years. It is traditionally known by its Latin title, the Nunc Dimittis, "Now dismiss us," and is a beautiful prayer-hymn to close the day. *(Continued on page 2)*

Reflect on the Following:

Simeon had an overpowering goal in his life, to identify and proclaim the Messiah.

We may not sense a calling of such dramatic proportions;

our commission may be much more modest.

But do you sense a call – a commission – to your family, your church, your community?

If so, what are you called to be or do?

From Prayers of the Bible for a Faithful Journey by Elizabeth Caldwell and Earle Hilgert

Tuesday, March 15

Psalm 63:1-8

Comfort and Assurance in God's Presence

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

**¹ O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.**

² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

³ Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

⁵ My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips

⁶ when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

⁷ for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

⁸ My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

Not long after I first moved away from home, I saw a hen running around, collecting her chicks under her wings as a storm came in. In that moment, I realized that is what Jesus meant when he compared himself to a mother hen and longer to gather one and all (Matthew 23:37)

In Psalm 63:7, we see that we can find shelter and closeness to God under God's wings, because God longs to hold us close. The psalmist remembers that in the storms and struggles of his history, God has given help, and that is what we hold close when obstacles and losses come our way. There may be storms, both inside and outside of us. In the shelter of God's wings, though, where we are held dearly, we sing for joy and give thanks.

Let us pray. May we give thanks even in the middle of our storms because we know you are walking with us and holding us close. Amen.

From These Days submitted by Michelle Bartel, Indianapolis, Indiana

Wednesday, March 16

Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

We live in a world where anxiety reigns. Inflation is rampant, gas prices are out of control, world-wide health concerns still impact our lives, political divisions cause uncomfortable discussions, war in Europe, and the list goes on. Our praying at times like this tend to be a laundry list of what we want God to do **RIGHT NOW** and we never seem to be able to let go of our anxiety.

In this Philippians passage we are encouraged to begin all our prayers and petitions **“with thanksgiving,”** present our requests, and God’s peace will guard us. I wonder if **BEGINNING** with taking the time to be thankful in our prayers reminds us of the many ways God is already in our lives and eases our anxiety so that we can clearly share with God our current needs.

Offer your prayer this way today:

Generous God, I give thanks to you for ...

Now, I humbly ask that you ...

In the name of my savior, Jesus, I always pray. Amen.

Thursday, March 17

Today is St. Patrick’s Day and is much more than wearing green and drinking beer. Let us reflect on the life of Patrick and close with his prayer for the faithful.

St. Patrick is the patron saint and national apostle of Ireland, credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland .

Patrick was born in Britain of a Romanized family. At age 16 was kidnapped by Irish raiders and carried into slavery in Ireland. He spent six bleak years there as a herdsman, during which he turned with fervor to his faith. Upon dreaming that the ship in which he was to escape was ready, he fled his master and found passage to Britain. There he came near to starvation and suffered a second brief captivity before he was reunited with his family.

After his return to Britain, Patrick had a dream in which he was given a letter titled **“The Voice of the Irish.”** As he read it, he seemed to hear a certain company of Irish beseeching him to walk once more among them. Nevertheless, because of the shortcomings of his education, he was reluctant for a long time to respond to the call. Even on the eve of his return to Ireland he had doubts about his fitness for the task. Once in the field, however, his hesitations vanished. *(Continued on Page 4)*

One legend associated with St. Patrick, probably the most popular, is that of the shamrock, which has him explaining the concept of the Holy Trinity, three persons in one God, to an unbeliever by showing him the three-leaved plant with one stalk. Traditionally, Irishmen have worn shamrocks, the national flower of Ireland, in their lapels on St. Patrick's Day, March 17.

Of course, we have not been called to preach and convert like Patrick. Yet, we have been called to share what Jesus means to us so that others might come to know him.

We need God's strength and wisdom to do so.

Let us pray the "Prayer for the Faithful: by Saint Patrick:

May the Strength of God guide us. May the Power of God preserve us.

May the Wisdom of God instruct us. May the Hand of God protect us.

May the Way of God direct us. May the Shield of God defend us.

May the Angels of God guard us, against the snares of the evil one.

May Christ be with us! May Christ be before us!

May Christ be in us, Christ be over all!

May Thy Grace, Lord, always be ours, this day, O Lord, and forevermore. Amen.

Friday, March 18

I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness;

I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.

Psalm 7:17

I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;

I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Psalm 9:1

I will give you thanks in the great assembly;

among the throngs I will praise you.

Psalm 35:18

The book of Psalms is a prayer book and hymnal. These passages reflect the psalmists' gratitude to God because of God's righteousness and wonderful deeds. The psalmists' sing and tell their thanks in private and in the worshipping congregation. Are you doing the same?

Pray the Lord's prayer.

Saturday, March 19

Hebrews 13:15-16

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

A sacrifice of praise which comes from the lips, but also from doing good and sharing with others; these are the offerings which God desires.

Pray the Lord's prayer.