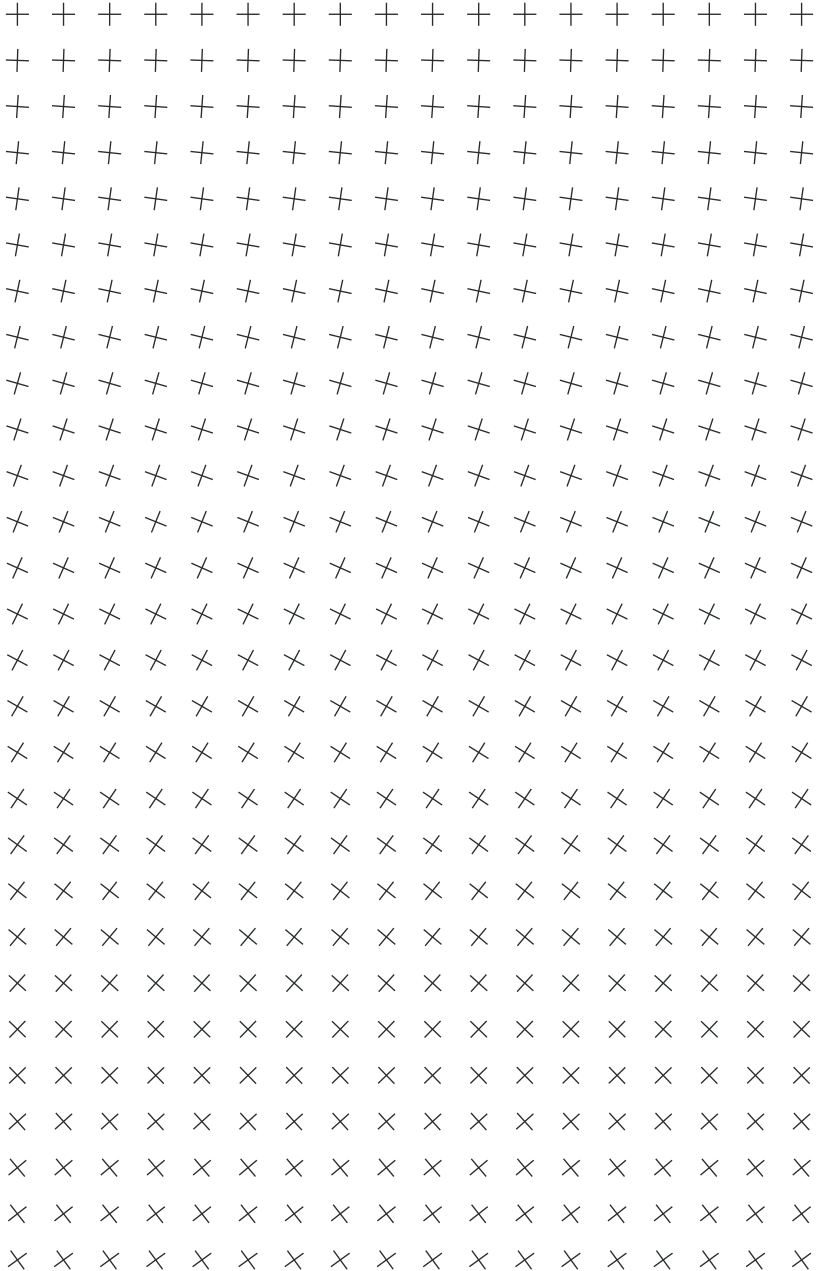


BLUEPRINT

1 SEASONAL
GUIDE

LENT

FEBRUARY - APRIL 2018



THE CHURCH'S LITURGICAL CYCLE

“The church year has seasons of darkness, of light, of sorrow, of rejoicing, of just getting through. Our lives have such seasons too. By incorporating these experiences, the church year hallows them, reminding us that all time is sacred because God is present in it.”

- Kimberlee Conway Ireton, *The Circle of Seasons: Meeting God in the Church Year*

Kimberlee Conway Ireton speaks of the cyclical, circular nature of the church year which provides us with repeated opportunities to live out various aspects of our faith and to see life through the lens of the Christ-story.

She says; “We can grow in, with and through the seasons of the church year. Some years those seasons will align with

what is happening in our lives. Other years, they will not. But the invitation to wait, prepare, repent, celebrate, receive and rejoice is always extended.”

The invitation for us is to opt into this new way of marking time. So this year, *Blueprint* is preparing seasonal guides to provoke and accompany us as we journey.

LENT

A SEASON OF DARKNESS

“That is what Lent is, a time to reckon with the reality of darkness and death. We do so with hope, because this season of darkness ends in Easter, in resurrection, in new life. But we can be raised to new life only if we have first died to the old one. That is the challenge - and the gift of Lent.”

Lent starts with Shrove Tuesday - a final fling of celebration before entering into a time of solemn remembrance.

Tuesday is followed by Ash Wednesday, where we remember that we are from ashes, and to ashes we shall return. We sit with the knowledge of our mortality, the fragility of our lives, of our

world, of our hopes, and all that is dear to us.

On Ash Wednesday, people would be marked with a sooty cross on their forehead - a reminder of the going down into the dust that is for us all.

Through this season of darkness we journey, and as Lent begins with an acknowledgement of sorrow, so the season ends with a proclamation of hope. Hope found in Jesus’ death, and his rising.

Like the words of Gungor’s song, “You make beautiful things out of the dust,” in Lent we sit with the dust and the ashes and we remember that God does bring

beauty from them - this is the redeeming work of Christ on our behalf.

It is our hope that this guided reflection will provide a way to access the richness of the church calendar tradition, that we would see the church year as another way God reaches into time to draw us to himself.

You may want to give something up for Lent. It could be drinking coffee, watching Netflix, using Facebook or drinking alcohol.

It doesn't really matter what it is, but maybe take a moment to see if there's something that God might bring to mind for you.

Or you may want to try adding something – participating in this seasonal guide, practicing a meditative prayer, journaling each day, choosing to greet people at the bus stop, going for a walk to talk with God.

Whatever it is, the action should become a way into reflection, and not the point of lent.



18 FEBRUARY

WEEK ONE

THE BAPTISM, TEMPTATION AND MISSION OF JESUS

MARK 1:9-15

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"



We begin our Lenten journey with Mark's account of the baptism, temptation and mission of Christ. Jesus is revealed for who he truly is - The wholly divine and wholly human Son of God.

He is then tempted.

Henri Nouwen likens the temptations of Christ as three assaults on His identity: The temptations of Satan are that

- Jesus is what others say about Him (Reputation),
- He is what he does (Work),
- He is what He has (Possessions).

Christ defeats each of these with the truth of who God says He is in the scriptures. Marks' account is very brief, but you can read more about this in Matthew 4:1-11.



It is from the assertion of His true identity that Christ begins His ministry, declaring that “The Kingdom of God has come near!” Christ’s mission flows first from the knowledge of who God says He is.

He is then able to reject the identities and accusations of the enemy. It is from this place that His work and mission flows.

RESPONSE

- 01** Which of Henri Nouwen's three false identities do you most often gravitate to? Are you defined by what you do? what others say about you? what you have?

- 02** The Baptism of Jesus is symbolic of His coming death and resurrection. How is God calling you to die to your false identities and be revealed as who he truly says you are?

- 03** Who do you think God says you are at your truest self? Ask him to draw that out in you.

WEEK ONE REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

25 FEBRUARY

WEEK TWO

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH

MARK 8:31-38

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.

We see here that Jesus puts forward another way from that His disciples expected. Jesus will not defeat the oppressive powers by wealth, power, coercion, or violence. Instead, he will absorb that violence into Himself. He will defeat the endless cycle of reciprocity by bearing it's force once and for all.

Peter couldn't see it. He pulls him aside and a fierce exchange with Jesus begins. Jesus calls him out, saying that he is seeing with

the lens of the Accuser and the Empire, rather than the way of God.

The way of Jesus is a bizarre one where the fullness of life is not found through feverish grasping, but by letting go of our power and believing that God will care for us as His children.

As it says in 1 Corinthians 1:18: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."



RESPONSE

01 What is offensive or challenging about the way that Jesus calls us to? How would it look in your work, home or education spaces if you tried to really live this out?

02 Where is God showing you that you might still be invested in the way of Empire? What might you need to leave behind to follow the way of Jesus? What do you need God to show you so you can trust Him in this other way?

WEEK TWO REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

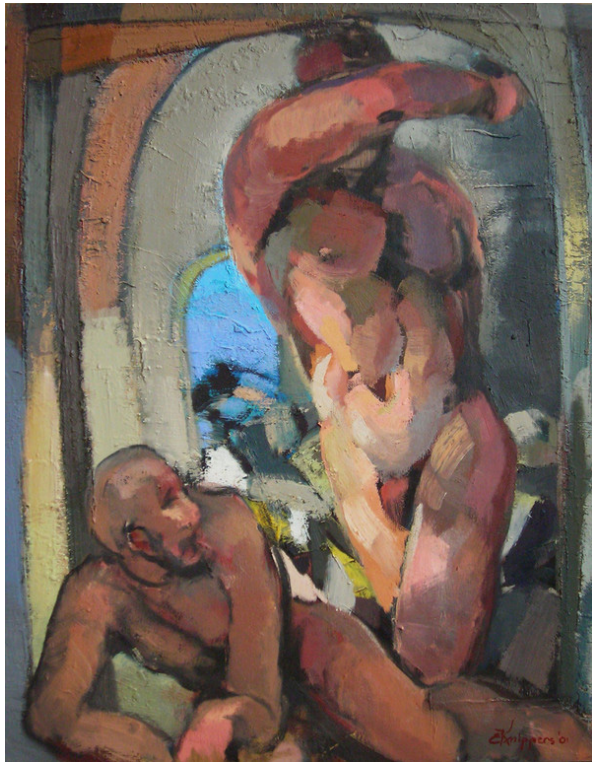
03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

4 MARCH

WEEK THREE

JESUS CLEARS
THE TEMPLE



JOHN 2:13-22

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"

His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

It was customary for Jews to return to the Temple in Jerusalem for the Passover; a festival which remembered God's liberation of the people from Egypt through Moses.

The Law required the Jews to make a sacrifice at the Temple. In Leviticus 1, God offered people ways to make sacrifices in keeping with what they could afford. An industry had grown around selling adequate cattle, sheep, or doves to those who had come to make an offering. Money lenders were on hand to swap out cash from other countries and regions for local currency.

Throughout His ministry, Christ ruthlessly critiques this religious system. He said of

the priests: "They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them." (Matthew 23:4) As a prophetic action, Jesus braids a whip and drives out the animals as a shepherd would (their owners follow).

Jesus shows that He is proposing a new kind of religion. God is no longer in temples, he has become flesh in Christ. When Jesus says He will destroy the Temple and rebuild it, he is foreshadowing His own death and resurrection.

After His death the disciples understood this, but this was a deeply offensive claim to make at the time.

RESPONSE

- 01** Think about how you see God. Are there ideas you hold which still suggest that you think God dwells in temples rather than within you?

- 02** Our contemporary religious equivalent is consumerism. We bring our cash to the temples of fashion and technology which buy us cultural capital, making us 'good enough' in the eyes of society. What might be one temple/religious idea Christ needs to tear down within you?

WEEK THREE REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

11 MARCH

WEEK FOUR

JESUS MUST BE LIFTED UP

JOHN 3:14-21

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Jesus begins, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.” Here, Jesus foreshadows His death again by saying He must be “lifted up” onto the cross.

Christ refers to an earlier story in Numbers 21. While the Israelites were passing through the desert they were attacked by venomous snakes. God told Moses to create a bronze snake lifted up on a pole so that whoever looked at it would not die.

Strangely, God takes the image of the same thing that was killing them to bring life and healing.

In the same way Christ’s victory over the powers was not by destroying the instruments of torture and oppression, but by entering into them. The cross - one of the most excruciating and humiliating deaths a person could undergo - becomes the lifted up symbol of hope, healing and victory.

This instrument of death transformed into a symbol of life by Jesus. This is what we call “The Paschal Mystery.” In what follows, Jesus compels His followers to fix their eyes on His cross to be healed.



RESPONSE

- 01** Spend some time thinking about Christ's crucifixion. What does it mean to you? How has this been a place of God's healing to you?

- 02** Romans 8:28 tells us that God is transforming all things for His children. The cross was transformed from a place of death to a place of life. Where have you seen God bring life out of the places of pain and death in your life?

- 03** What healing and hope you are awaiting at the moment that may not have come yet?

WEEK FOUR REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

18 MARCH

WEEK FIVE

A GRAIN OF WHEAT

————— JOHN 12:20-33 —————

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.



“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up[a] from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

It is a year since the last time Jesus was at the Passover in week three of our Lenten journey. This time, He illustrates a principle for those who will become His Church: "...unless a kernel of wheat falls the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

Seeds and gardens are a common metaphor in Jesus' teaching. We see this in the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32).

Jesus says that to follow Him is to do what He does and go where He goes. So He says in Luke 9:23 that those who want

to follow Him must "take up their cross..." Jesus invites us to take our place on the instrument of death alongside Him.

Our Lenten journey isn't just about His death, it's about what we are dying to as well.

One of the strangest things we believe as Christians is that God is not only present in our suffering, but glorified. We believe that the world is not changed by overpowering oppression, but by subverting it through submission to it. We believe that through pain and death God miraculously brings life, freedom and multiplication.

RESPONSE

01 What do you find challenging or difficult about Jesus' invitation to die with Him?

02 Where have you seen places of despair or hopelessness give birth to unexpected hope?

03 What is an aspect of your life where you are taking your place alongside Jesus at the moment?

WEEK FIVE REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

25 MARCH

WEEK SIX

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

JOHN 12:20-33

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.

They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!"

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

Jesus enters into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. The excited crowd is full of pilgrims who had gathered for Passover, the celebration of God's liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt.

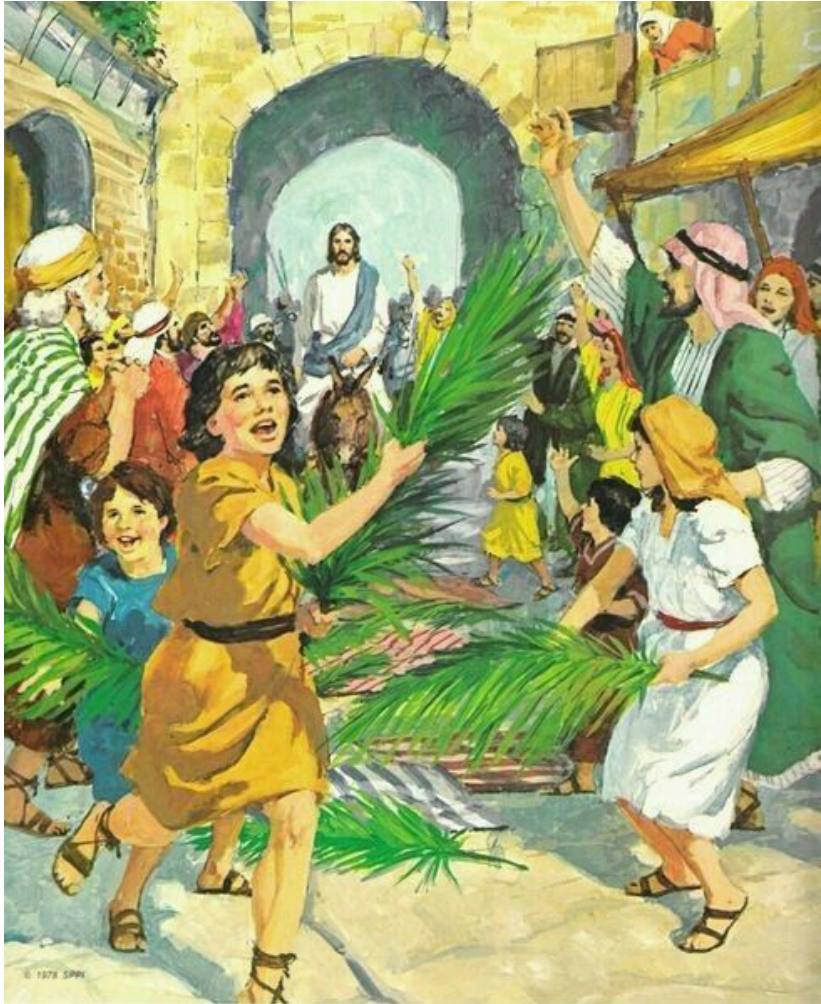
The crowd is hungry for God to save them again, except this time from the occupation of Rome. They cry out "Hosanna" ("Save, Please!"), willing Jesus to intervene - to be the mighty one who comes from God to free them from Roman occupation.

Tim Keller calls Jesus the counter-intuitive King. We see this in Jesus strange entry into town on the back of a donkey. Like a powerful leader riding into town on a child's trike.

By the time Jesus is crucified, only a few days later, the disjunct between who the crowd thinks Jesus is, and who he truly is, is revealed.

The story of the triumphal entry provides an incredible parable of the life long mismatch of what we think we need, and what God has provided.

The cheering crowd felt they needed God to bring judgment down on the Romans for ruining the world as they knew it, but what they really needed was someone to bear the judgment for themselves and the Romans, for God to save them by making the ultimate pardon for wrong, and to usher in reconciliation between God and people.



RESPONSE

- 01** The people cried out to God ‘Hosanna!’ - seeking God’s salvation, but weren’t prepared for the way that it would come about. Can you think of a time God’s freedom has come differently to your expectations?

- 02** The crowd and the disciples misunderstood Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. What is something you are awaiting God’s deliverance for at the moment? Where might be an unexpected place God is moving?

WEEK SIX REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

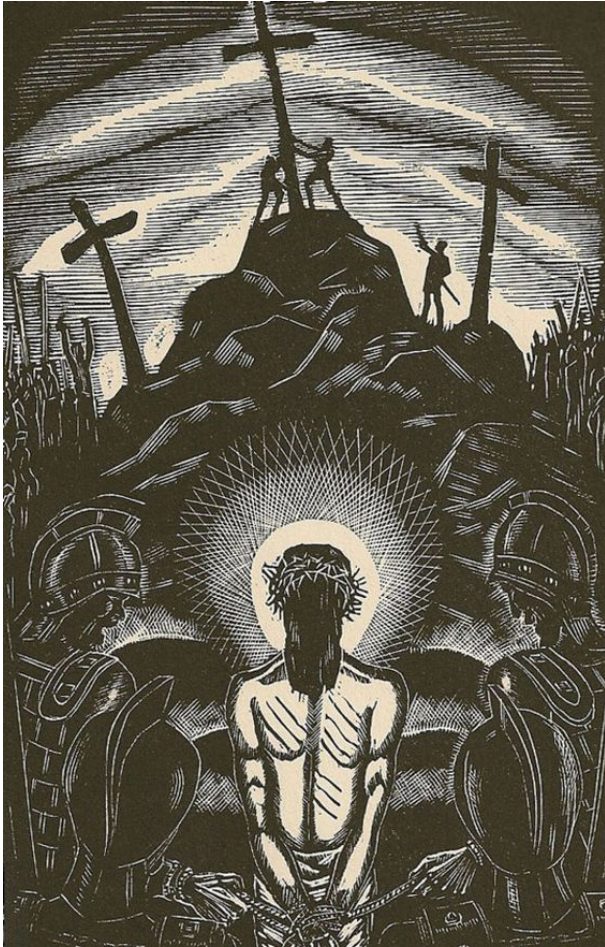
What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

1 APRIL

WEEK SEVEN



EASTER

JOHN 12:20-33

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

There hangs the king

Our Aslan

With his matted, dirty, bloodstained mane

Crowned in a crown of mockery

How lowly he is before his lowly audience

Heads bowed bearing witness to his shame.....our sin

Humanity reflected in protruding bones, raw flesh, glistening eyes,

blemished skin

Without an opiate he cries out to the father

In this moment forsaken as we feel forsaken

Yet none remain orphans

No experience than this greater depicts our pain

The very truth of our existence revealed in the suffering

Beauty found in what is detested

Lashings of scorn appear as ugly tattoos, superficial emblems of sin

Yet these scars only have the power to heal trembling children

Our stories become one under the greatest sacrifice called love

Grace pours from his wounds as life is revealed in the woodwork, life

contingent with death

Blood made to nourish so we may nourish others

The body that was broken breathes life into hollow bones

So we may draw close,

Come to know

The name that means freedom.

Talia Merrin

Our Lenten journey arrives at the cross.

Jesus was deserted by His friends, beaten, whipped, crowned with thorns, and died a humiliating and torturous death on the tree at Calvary. Jesus absorbs the powers of sin, death, and violence into himself on our behalf. He reconciles us to God by becoming the one pure and final sacrifice for humanity.

Three days later, the tomb is found empty. Jesus has risen. Christ has taken the most final and absolute power in the universe - death - and overcome it.

If death cannot hold him, then nothing can! Not only does Jesus submit to the pain and violence of our world, he transforms that darkness into light.

As followers of Christ, we participate in this same process of death and resurrection in our own lives. When we give ourselves over to Jesus we die to our old lives, and because we have died with Christ we also come alive with him. This is a powerful act of trust for every Christian: to throw away our old lives and hope that God will give us a deeper and richer life in Him.

This is a time where we can recommit ourselves to Christ, remembering that He loves us so deeply that He endured the most horrific torture to bring us life. It is a time to sit with the central moment of our story as Christians and to offer our lives up afresh to God, responding to His passionate love for us with gratitude and obedience.

RESPONSE

You may like to start by lighting a candle.

01

Spend a few minutes in silent reflection on the death of Jesus. Extinguish the candle when you are ready as a symbol of Christ's journey through darkness. What would you like to say to Jesus as you consider His death on the cross?

02

Light the candle again. Light has entered the world. What would it be like to see Jesus in the flesh standing before you? What would you like to say to Him?

03

What is God asking you to die to at the moment? If you have not been baptised, you may like to talk to a Blueprint leader about this crucial moment of sharing the death and resurrection of Jesus.

WEEK SEVEN REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

8 APRIL

WEEK EIGHT

JESUS APPEARS TO
THE DISCIPLES



JOHN 12:20-33

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jewish people were highly concerned about being clean before God, and this desire to be clean had real physical implications over food, dress and actions.

The Jewish worldview saw humans in our physicality as being very distinct from God. Jews therefore were not open to the idea that a human being could be God. Their whole worldview held that humans and God were totally distinct.

In meeting the resurrected Jesus the disciples expectations were shattered. Thomas' confession - my Lord and my God - is in response to seeing the physicality of Jesus, and his return after

death. Thomas relinquishes all that makes sense to him, proclaiming that somehow these two things - fully human, fully divine - can be one.

Notice also that the disciples start out afraid – locked in a room away from the authorities, and Jesus greets them with peace, before sending them out.

We read in the gospels that after these encounters with Jesus the disciples were emboldened and did go out and share the news of the resurrected Jesus, and the forgiveness he offers.

RESPONSE

- 01** What are the things you feel like you're hiding in fear from? Write those situations down below and then imagine Jesus walking with you into those places and speaking the words 'peace be with you'.

- 02** Throughout the Bible the language for 'spirit' means breath or air in motion. Spend a minute noticing your breathing. How does thinking about God being as close to you as your breath make you feel?

WEEK EIGHT REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

15 APRIL

WEEK NINE

JESUS GIVES THE HOLY SPIRIT

LUKE 26: 34-48

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.



Tom Wright says “at the end of the book of Revelation, heaven and earth will finally be joined together into one, there won’t be any more shuttling to and fro; the two dimensions will be fused together at last.”

Jesus appearance in person demonstrates the meeting of heaven and earth now. He appears in a locked room, yet is not a ghost. He eats some fish. Jesus appearances showed the disciples what heaven and earth meeting would look like. It showed them a glimpse of how the new creation will be drawn from the old.

By meeting with his friends, Jesus makes the disciples witnesses to his fulfilling of the promises

made to Abraham, Moses and the prophets. Carefully he explains to them how his life and death and resurrection is part of the long story God has been working out with humanity, so that “the whole world would be brought into the embrace of God’s saving and healing love.”

This is the good news that Jesus gives to his disciples to share - that the damage of sinful human brokenness which creates destruction within us and between us, has been overcome in the risen Christ.

That means there is hope now for heaven to come on earth, more and more, until there is a total fusing of earth and heaven.

RESPONSE

01 How does Jesus eating fish and talking with his friends challenge your perception of heaven?

02 Think about how Jesus has revealed hope to you. In what ways could God use you, like he did the disciples, to share that hope with someone in your neighbourhood this week?

WEEK NINE REFLECTION

01

What do I think God is saying to me? What is He revealing about who I am and where I'm going?

02

What significant scriptures have I meditated on this week?

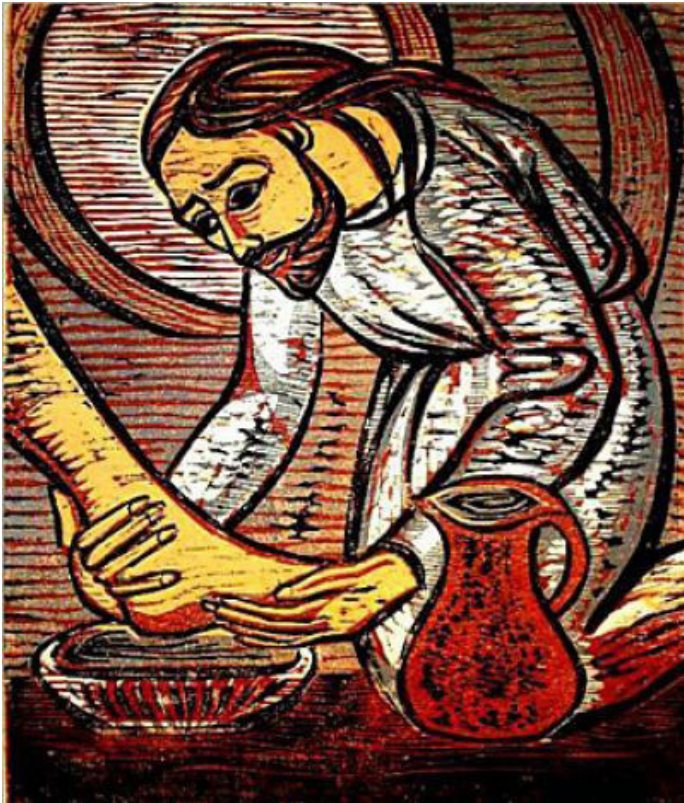
03

How have friends / family confirmed what I think God is saying?

22 APRIL

WEEK TEN

JESUS DIED FOR US



1 JOHN 3:16-24

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

When we speak of love, we are reduced to only metaphors and similes. We say love is like a fire, an ocean, or a feeling. Yet we can only truly know what love is when it is embodied. So it is that we only really know what love is when we look upon the crucified Jesus who gave His life for ours.

Our hearts often betray us and condemn us. We lose sight of who we are and who God is and fall into the trap of judging ourselves by what we should have done and what we should be.

In the words of our poet friend Joel McKerrow, “Should is an ugly word.” In our long list of self-condemnations we

forget that Christ’s self-sacrificing example of love eclipses all of these things, meaning that we need be nothing else but His.

Our call and command is simply to believe in Him. To fix our gaze upon Him as embodied love and, from this place, to know that we are not condemned. “For Christ did not come to condemn the world, but to save it.” (John 3:17)

There is nothing left to be done, nothing left to be earned, nothing left to be proved.

You are as accepted now as you ever will be, and you need only look to the cross to remember the passion and depth of God’s love for you.

RESPONSE

01 What is a “should” or a statement of self-condemnation you live from at the moment?

02 What might Jesus embodiment of love on the cross offer to your “should”?

03 What is something you can’t accept in yourself that God is challenging you to see the way He does?

WEEK TEN REFLECTION

01

What is something significant God has spoken to me during this season of Lent?

02

Which scriptures or experiences on this journey have spoken to me? Why?

03

What is a challenge God is asking me to respond to?

