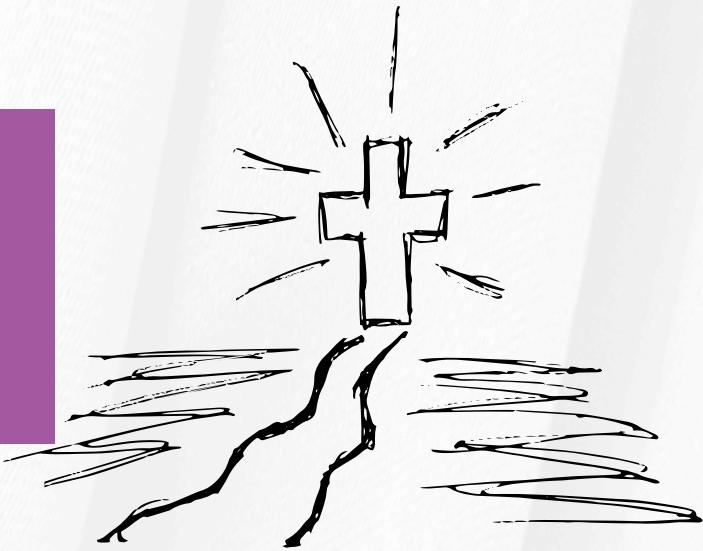


JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

Daily Lenten Scriptures and Prayers
February 18 - 21



WEDNESDAY, FEB 18, JOHN 10:11-18

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

QUESTIONS FOR DAILY REFLECTION

Jesus says he is willing to face the wolves of sin and death to protect his sheep. Who has faced wolves on your behalf? What wolves are you willing to face for others?

PRAYER

With ashes on our brows and across our hearts, we are mindful of where the Lenten path leads. The good shepherd, the one who calls, the one who knows, the one who searches, the one who hopes when all seems lost, will lay down his life to redeem us all. He will face the wolves of fear, animosity, sin, and death to help his sheep. In this season of self-sacrifice, we ask, O God, that we might have the courage of the good shepherd, the willingness to set ourselves to the side to help others. Grant, O God, that we may be able to face down the wolves that show up at our neighbor's door. And should some wolves come our way, we ask that you provide us with some help in facing them as well. Amen.

THURSDAY, FEB 19, LUKE 15: 1-7

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.'

QUESTIONS FOR DAILY REFLECTION

Think of a time you felt lost. What or who helped you to find your way? What joy is found in repentance?

PRAYER

When I'm the one who needs forgiveness, grant me unending mercy. When I'm the one who judges others, grant me a kind heart. When I'm the one who is lost, help me to find a good and fruitful direction. When I'm the one who needs to be searching, give me a flashlight that never goes out. When I'm the one throwing the party, let me offer a wide invitation. When I'm the one responding to the invitation, let me be a gracious guest. And no matter what, let me always be your child, loved, forgiven, found, and known. Amen.

FRIDAY, FEB 20, JOHN 10:22-30

At that time, the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'

QUESTIONS FOR DAILY REFLECTION

Think through your day. What voices do you hear? How do you choose which voices you follow and which ones you ignore?

PRAYER

Sometimes, O God, it is just easier to pretend that we didn't hear or that we didn't know it was you. It kind of makes our lives simpler if we believe that your truth has been obfuscated, hidden, or only partly revealed to us. "We'd be happy to follow," we say, "if only you would tell us plainly what to do." We willfully ignore the fact that in the scripture, in the life of Jesus, and through the lives of the saints, your voice has already been made known. We have already heard, do unto others as you'd like done to you, love God with your whole being, love your neighbor as yourself. You've spoken plainly, and we know your voice. Help us to live in response to it. Amen.

SATURDAY, FEB 21, JOHN 10: 31-42

The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?' The Jews answered, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God.' Jesus answered, 'Is it not written in your law, "I said, you are gods"? If those to whom the word of God came were called "gods"—and the scripture cannot be annulled— can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, "I am God's Son"? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.' Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands.

He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. Many came to him, and they were saying, 'John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.' And many believed in him there.

QUESTIONS FOR DAILY REFLECTION

Jesus says that his works are his testimony. His works say everything he needs to say about himself. What do your works say about you? What works would you like to do more of? What works would you like to do less of?

PRAYER

My day is full of things I've done and plenty of things I've left undone (I see you, dishes). No doubt some of them meant something to someone. But how do I know which things were good and whether or not they were the good things? After all, it would be just as easy for someone to notice my moment of impatience as it would be for someone to notice my moment of compassion. Just as noticeable is my tendency toward greed as is my willingness to serve others. I'm a mixed bag, O God. I always will be. I'll try to do more good things, but until I do, magnify my more glorious moments and obscure the other things. Help me to do the things of peace, kindness, and justice while I learn to leave the works of vengeance, mistrust, and separation right where they are, undone and in a pile next to the sink. Amen.