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### Christ in All Times

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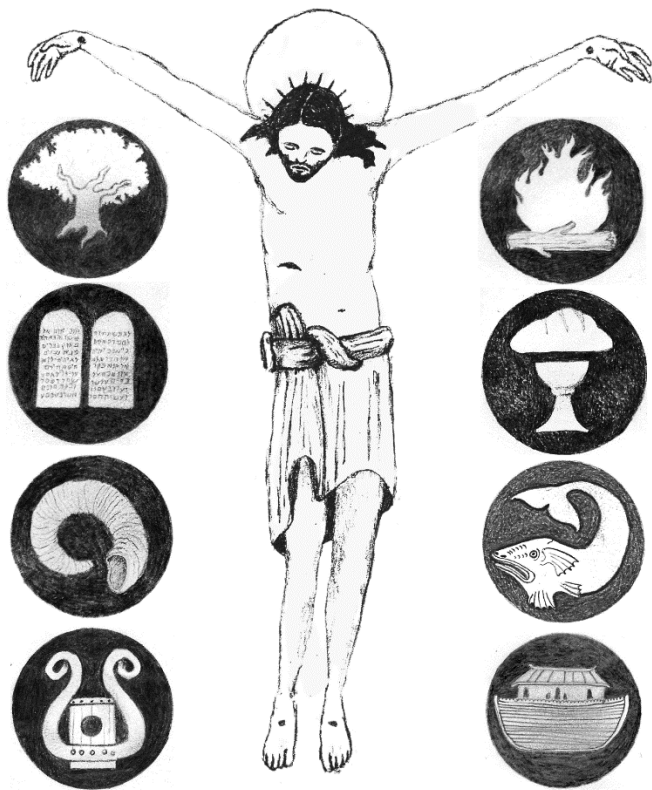
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# Christ in All Times



## Devotions for Lent

*From the students at  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and  
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne*



*[Jesus said,] “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”*

*Luke 10:23–34*

Throughout the Old Testament, there are prefigurations, foreshadows, and prophecies of the coming Messiah. Through the person and work of various people throughout the Scriptures, God’s people saw glimpses into the greater person and work of Christ Jesus. These figures are often called Christ figures because they in some way exemplify a characteristic of Christ: life, security, deliverance, promised land, king, prophet, priest, sacrifice. As St. Paul says, “These are but a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col. 2:7).

God’s people waited for the coming Messiah, and in Christ, the disciples saw this fulfilled. During the season of Lent, we will meditate on just a few of these Christ figures, and like the disciples, see how Christ is in all times.

Each Wednesday we will focus upon a new Old Testament character and see how their person is fulfilled in Christ. Each section is marked by an image representing the person and a corresponding stanza from an original hymn.

This booklet is the product of a joint effort between the students from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. It serves as a reminder that we are one Body in Christ Jesus. Thank you to everyone for all the time and effort you put into writing devotions. A special thank you to Henry Eising for designing the art. Also a special thank you to Owen Duncan for composing an original hymn for this series, that is printed in the back.

*—Avery Hjulberg, CSL & Patrick Randolph, CTSFW  
Lent 2024*



## ADAM † LIFE

*God gave His breath to dust and clay,  
And man with life was crowned,  
But he would sin—his Lord betray—  
And to the grave was bound.*

*This path towards death, since Adam's fall,  
All flesh was forced to tread  
Till Christ would ford a way for all  
As firstborn from the dead.*

*Genesis 3:17–19*

This devotion is about life. It is about life because lent is about life.

Sure, the reading for today is God’s curse from Genesis. Adam is going to die. Sure, it’s Ash Wednesday, “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” You are going to die. Sure, this is the beginning of Lent, the slow trudge toward Good Friday. Jesus is going to die. But this devotion is about life because Adam, Ash Wednesday, and Lent work if they are about life.

And they are. Adam’s dust and our dust share a common destiny—that destiny is life. We will, of course, like Adam, our first father, return to the dust. But we will also, like our brother, Jesus, rise as on Easter morning. As Christ lives, so will Adam. So will we. Life is where it all will end.

And because we have been promised life by Jesus, we can, as theologian John Behr puts it, “use our death.” We use our death when we, by the power of the Spirit, mortify the things that hinder our life in Christ: our unwillingness to forgive, our bitterness, our judgment, our pride, our laziness, our pretension to earning life. We journey toward life this Lent even while we fully possess it by promise. So on the way, you can use your death to shed the little deaths that hinder you. Try choosing one of them and start there. In full confidence that your ashes share a common fate with Adam’s ashes, following the path of Jesus’ ashes, you can use your death to live.

Lent is, after all, about life.

*Lord Jesus Christ, you are the greater Adam in whom my ashes are given new life. Grant that I, by trust in your promises and the power of your Spirit, may use my death in faith to put away what hinders my life with you. Bring my body, at last, purified from every sin and weight, out of death to eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth with you and all your people. Grant it according to your gracious will. Amen.*

*1 Corinthians 15:20–22*

Adam was the first life of all mankind. He was created perfect and was supposed to live in harmony with God through all eternity. Satan sabotaged this perfect union and, through the eating of the forbidden fruit, separated Adam and, in turn, us from perfection. Life was forever changed, and sin permeated throughout all generations.

This turning away from God left us powerless to return to God's favor so he sent Christ. He lived the perfect life and gave up his life to restore us to everlasting life. Through his resurrection, our lifeless corpses are restored to what should have been in the Garden of Eden.

Sin will still kill our bodies, but our eternal life has been secured. While the first Adam fell short and brought death into the world, Jesus Christ is the second Adam who brings life into a dying world. Where Adam fell short in a perfect garden and was tempted by Satan, Christ in the desolate wilderness, stayed firm and did not sin.

*Almighty Father, you sent your son to restore life to a dying world. Keep us steadfast in your word and continue to restore us through your Sacraments. Through Jesus Christ your son. Amen.*



*1 Corinthians 15:45–49*

Walking into the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Center outside Santo Domingo, you cannot escape the reality that we live in a broken world. People there are dealing with challenges and disabilities that range from intellectual to physical to emotional. Many are affected to the point where they are unable to speak. In addition, these patients carry heavy social burdens; a supportive network of family and friends is the exception, and abandonment and neglect are common.

This fallen reality was given to us by the first Adam (and Eve), when they brought sin into the world. And yet that same earthly desire to neglect God and each other runs through our veins too. Therefore, the legacy of the first earthly Adam is that of challenges, broken relationships, and death. But our God did not abandon us. He sent a second 'Adam'; a heavenly Adam named Jesus Christ. A heavenly Adam who set aside earthly desires, and whose legacy is that of steadfast love and resurrection from the dead.

In faith, let's clothe ourselves in Christ; let's bear his heavenly image; let's build relationships based on his legacy; let's pray.

*Almighty God, you have never given up on us. Help us put to death our old selfish 'Adam,' and put on the new Adam, that we may reflect your heavenly steadfast love to those that need to hear it most, through Jesus Christ, our new Adam. Amen.*

*John 11:17-27*

Out of the mouth of the LORD comes the breath of life. Adam first received this gift with the charge to continue generating life. Instead, Adam begat death through the first sin. This was Lazarus' inheritance. This was our own inheritance.

God, the Author of All Life, refused to leave us in this state. He sent forth the Second Adam, with the express purpose of breathing life back into all creation. Martha, awash with tears, stood boldly before the one who is the Resurrection and the Life, trusting that life would come forth from his mouth. Seeing her faith, Jesus went to Lazarus, and from his mouth life rushed forth.

This was not the only time that Jesus brought life into this dying world. Ultimately, he was sent to undo the death that our forefather Adam had brought upon us. From the mouth of Jesus came the breath of life to the whole world when he announced that "It is finished." Today, we are reminded that without the breath of new life given to us through the Word, we would return to dust and ashes with no hope of resurrection, as would our forefathers Lazarus and Adam. Praise God that this isn't so.

*Father of all mercy and goodness, through the Word of your Son you raised Lazarus from the dead, giving us a foretaste of resurrection on the Last Day. Grant that we who have been given new life in our baptism may be kept secure in the true faith until our own death and resurrection unto eternal life of the world to come. Through the same Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.*

*Romans 5:12–14*

Adam was created in the image of God. Perfect and holy was He. He was given the gift of stewarding God's creation. God sought to dwell with His creation from the beginning and into eternity. When Adam disobeyed God's command, sin and death entered the world. God the Father in His infinite wisdom knew that Adam could never atone for the sin that plagued creation. He promises Adam a Savior.

So, Adam waited, trusting in God's promise. The Lord established Israel and gave them His Law. By doing this God would consign all to disobedience, so that He may have mercy on all. God's Law shows us our sinfulness, it leaves us needing a Savior. Someone who could be what we cannot be.

Adam's son, the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the New Adam. Jesus is the obedient son who brings the Kingdom of God. He was obedient to death, only death could not hold Christ. He rose from the dead and is restoring and stewarding creation. In our baptism, we were put to death with Christ, buried, and given new life. Now we await the coming of our Lord to fully experience the new life that He will bring us.

*Lord Jesus, you are the New Adam, the obedient Son of the Father. The gracious Savior who deals patiently with sinners. We give you thanks for being merciful towards us. As we reflect on our sinfulness, we praise you for making us new creatures, for making us your sons and daughters in our baptism. We ask that you continually sanctify us, shaping us to be more like you every day. We await your second coming where all things will be made new. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

*Romans 5:15–21*

At some point or another, you have probably heard someone say something along the lines of, “This ain’t a one-man show.” While performances featuring a single performer can be quite the spectacle, the phrase is most often used in this more negative light to remind someone that he probably ought to be consulting everyone else before making a decision.

Paul tells of two one-man shows in Romans 5, one bad and one good. The first is the one of Adam, father of all mankind. Adam gave into temptation, and because of that blunder, all his descendants now constantly struggle against sin, death, and the devil, facing God’s righteous judgment as such. God on the other hand, being the only one capable of saving sinful man, authored a second show featuring His only begotten Son for man’s salvation.

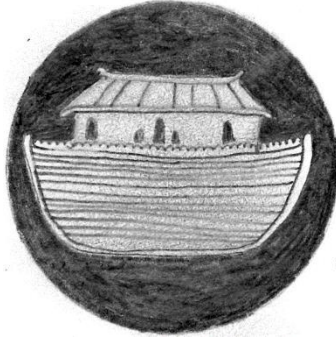
Just as the disobedience of a single man introduced humanity’s ills, the obedience of Jesus, the New Adam, gave humanity the free gift of being made righteous through God’s abundant grace. We are saved by Christ alone, and as feeble as we are, it really is good for us that He chose to be a one-man show.

*Lord Jesus Christ, you have called each of us individually and have called us into community. We give you thanks for Your sacrifice on the cross, that through Your work on the cross our sins are forgiven. Strengthen us against us against temptation. In your name. Amen.*

*Romans 6:1–11*

St. Paul does not say here, as we might expect, that we were baptized in order that we would be raised from our eventual graves (though we certainly will be!). He says we were baptized in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, “we too might walk in newness of life.” Rather than paralleling Christ’s resurrection with our own resurrection, he parallels it with our new manner of life. He says this in answer to the question that is begged by his teaching of sola fide—why not continue to sin so that grace will be even more gracious? Because, the Apostle says: you are alive to God, not dead to him. The “glory of the Father” is what energizes our new obedience, just as it energized Christ’s previously lifeless body in the tomb. Whereas through Adam the enslaving power of sin had subjected us to pointlessness and decay, now through Christ the power of the resurrection has come forward into the present, suffusing our baptized bodies, minds, and wills and enabling us to walk in the good works he has prepared for us.

*Heavenly Father, grant us grace in this season of Lent to count ourselves as dead to sin and alive to you, that the power of the resurrection would be shown forth in our lives here and now. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



## NOAH † SECURITY

*Once Noah built—when rains beset—  
A boat which God contrived;  
The waters drowned the world, and yet—  
Those in the ark survived.  
So too behind a cross of wood  
We hide when storms arise;  
For Christ has made a promise good  
That here salvation lies.*

*Genesis 6:1–8*

God's People in our text fell to the corruption of beauty and power as they married as they pleased and sought to be widely acclaimed. Their pursuit of these things instead of God's will, led to God's patience drawing thin towards judgment. God's people turned from His security to self-made insecurity. How often do we turn from God?

We need to take an honest look at our lives. In doing so we see the infirmity of our sin and notice our tendency to do what we think is best for us. We wander from God's path and participate in the evil that overwhelms His creation. Our hearts are corrupted, and we lean into our own insecure inclinations instead of resting in God's clear will.

Though His people turned from Him, He shows His mercy in finding favor with Noah. It is through Noah that God preserves His promise of a Savior, His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore our security is in Jesus and by grace through faith we receive favor in the eyes of the LORD. Through His death and resurrection we receive atonement and eternal life.

*Lord, we know of our sin and thank you for your abundant grace. Comfort us in the security of your Son that we may cling to you and be assured of your great love. We pray this in your heavenly name. Amen.*

*Genesis 6:9–22*

St. Augustine asserts that God's instructions for the ark mirror the dimensions of a man lying upon his back. The prone figure, Augustine is certain, can only be Christ. Begotten by God yet formed by means in the creation, Noah's ark points to Jesus.

The ark offers an answer to the terrifying consequence of evil. For evil—sin, wickedness, and every way of death—must meet its end at the hand of the righteous and almighty creator. However, the One who spoke all things into being does not desire His creation's demise. Instead, the Lord tells Noah to build a vehicle for salvation—a body of gopher wood and pitch designed to preserve life amid torrents of death. Rather than allow death victory over creation, the Lord of life secured life for Noah and his family. In the ark, just as in Christ, the Lord saves His people. Notice, though, that our Lord is more gracious. For into the ark God sent humans and two of every living thing of flesh. Likewise, lest we forget, Christ came to save not only you and me but all of creation. On His body, the sins of the whole world are laid. And in His death and resurrection, those debts were paid and the power of death was overcome. Jesus Christ secured your life, my life, and the life of the whole world. Even the creation is redeemed in Christ, and when He returns, all things will be made new.

As St. Augustine says, we have begun to see the new life of Christ already being poured upon creation. Just as the ark opened to pour out the life our Lord preserved with the command to be fruitful and multiply, so too was Christ's side riven that water and blood might pour out His life upon this earth and upon His people. And that life we have in Christ must be multiplied by the proclaiming, hearing, and believing of His Word. Proclaim His promises in this age of death. The age of life eternal will be here soon.

*Holy Spirit, give us the words to speak so that we may boldly proclaim Christ to others. Amen.*



*Genesis 7:1–5*

Noah believed, and, like Abram, it was counted to him as righteousness. For all of the wickedness in the world, Noah feared God. Through the sin and turmoil of the Godless generation in which Noah lived, he was set apart in his righteousness as the representative of humanity. Not by any works of his own, but because of the work that God would do through him. Noah was chosen as the one whom God would use to preserve humanity through the sin-stained creation in the refuge of the ark.

Just as Noah was used to preserve humanity in his generation, Christ preserves humanity through all generations in His suffering and dying on the cross. Christ redeems the wickedness of the world. He is the one counted righteous before men as He is Righteousness. It is through Christ's blood-stained cross that the wrath of God is removed from the heads of sinners and turned to righteousness as we are clothed in the blood of the lamb. Just as Noah was the righteous man in his generation who sought refuge on the ark, we can now claim refuge in the cross of Christ who preserves us through this and all wicked generations.

*Heavenly Father, just as Noah found refuge in the Ark, we give you thanks for the cross, where we find refuge. Protect us from all calamity. Amen.*

*Genesis 7:17–24*

If we were to read these verses in isolation, our conclusion might simply be hopelessness. The flood continues. The waters pile up, threatening ever-greater heights. Death abounds, as God’s judgment for sin fills the earth that was once so perfect. So pure. Only Noah and his family are left. Stuck in an ark, as the waves and floods pound their vessel. Who wouldn’t feel hopeless?

Yet, notice the verses immediately surrounding this text. Right before the floods start, Noah and his family enter the ark and the LORD shuts them in (Gen 7:16). And, immediately following the 150 days of the prevailing floodwaters, “God remembered Noah...” (Gen 8:1). Amid such calamity and hopelessness, God remembers Noah and delivers Him, just as He promised.

This shows us the heart of God. He remembers His people and delivers them. Noah is the one of the first to experience that. But he’s certainly not the last, and he points us this Lent to Jesus Christ and Him crucified, where we find the fullest expression of God’s heart. He remembers us and delivers us from our sin, just as He promised.

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for remembering and delivering Noah and his family through the flood. May you keep us safe in the ark of your Church and deliver us unto life everlasting. Amen.*

*Genesis 9:7–17*

Creation is reborn. Yet for Noah, this is no paradise. He knows well that the stain of original sin is pervasive, far beyond man's ability to scrub out. And so God establishes a covenant with him and every living creature, promising never again to destroy the world by water as He has just done. Likewise, in Baptism, our old Adam is drowned. He is not obliterated—just as the earth was not annihilated, as if to return to pre-Genesis 1 days—because Christ must have something left to redeem. The repetition of the command to Adam in paradise before the fall, “Be fruitful and multiply,” further confirms God's original intent for the world, that mankind ought to enjoy life in communion with the Creator. That many will turn away from Him to follow their own lusts does not take away from God's good and gracious will for His people. The promises of God, all of them, are true and certain and beautiful, like the rainbow that graces the sky after rainfall.

*Almighty and merciful God, who preserved eight souls in all aboard the ark, keep us within the ark of our Baptism, which assures us our place within your Church, that we may ever enjoy the blessings which you have promised to us both in this life and the next; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*Matthew 24: 36–44*

When tasked with searching the Scriptures, students of theology are sometimes admonished to “look for the unexpected.” Our Lord does many things in unexpected ways. When we pick out what those things are, we may be given insight into His nature and ways. In Matthew 24, we learn—outright—that Christ is going to do something unexpectedly: He is going to return.

In this passage, Christ proclaims that the manner in which He is going to return has been communicated to men since long before His hearers may have expected. God has been working since the days of Noah to show His people how He delivers His salvation! Yes, His coming is to those who wait for Him, as Noah waited. Nevertheless, His coming is unexpected.

Thanks be to God that at the coming of the Son of Man, you and I will already find ourselves happily within the ark of His salvation, delivered there by the water and blood of the cross of Calvary. The rains that come then will not mean deadly drowning. They will be a gladdening reminder of the waters which sealed us into that very ark—the waters of our Baptism into Christ Jesus.

*Gracious Heavenly Father, since the days of Noah you have shown your people that your coming is with power and might. Guide us so that, just as you spoke to Noah and delivered him from the waters of death, we also may be guided by your Holy Word unto salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*1 Peter 3:18–22*

The same water which God sent to destroy the earth and the evil upon it, he used to save the eight persons upon the ark. The same watered that drowned the unfaithful was the means used to preserve the faithful. They were indeed brought safely through water, and baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you. You who were once dead in your trespasses have died to sin.

God drowned you. At the font, he drowned all of your unbelief, all of your idolatry, all of your disdain for your neighbor. The sin of the first Adam was buried in water, and the life of the second Adam arose to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. The same Spirit which God sent over the waters after the flood, he sent upon you. This is your life. This is your security. Baptism now saves you.

*Heavenly Father, you have united me to the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus, in baptism. Please grant that I may daily return to this promise and so find life and salvation there, that I might live in obedience to your will and joyfully await the resurrection of the dead on the last day. Amen.*



## MOSES † DELIVERANCE

*In Egypt Israel worked as slaves,  
But Moses by God's hand  
Would lead the people through the waves  
And to the promised land.  
Now we too had by sin incurred  
A debt, and slaves would be,  
Till Christ through water and the Word,  
Should make us free indeed.*

*Exodus 6:1–13*

“Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me.” (Exod 6:12)

Why do humans so easily ignore God’s words, grow weary, rebel? Even Moses, mouthpiece of God though he was, lost faith. Perhaps it is because humans are used to living without hope, slaves to hearts stuck in the mud and clay of their own broken wills. The good news of Christ is often rejected by what it goes out to save, hearts enslaved to sinful desires.

During Lent, we consider Christ’s good news of liberation from sin. But resisting sinful inclinations and establishing spiritual disciplines is hard work. We may feel at times that it’s not worth the effort, that we’d rather be back with the meat-pots than battling spiritual forces in the wilderness.

Christ endured being rejected by his own people so that he could break sin’s power over us. He is still patient with our recalcitrant hearts, calling out day by day, “Come, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

*Lord God, teach us to take up Christ’s yoke with our whole mind, so that reflecting constantly on the Lord’s suffering, we may be able to rejoice in our own Christian sufferings and say, with saint Paul, “I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities on Christ’s behalf. For when I am weak, then I am strong,” through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Exodus 14:10–18*

This complaint of the Israelites, just before being brought through the Red Sea, is a familiar sentiment to Christians. Replace “the Egyptians” with anyone of your idols—sports, fashion, celebrities, politics, podcast heads, or, primarily, yourself—and you’ll find the phrase fits right at home: “For it would have been better for me to serve myself than to die in the wilderness.”

The Old Adam in you, just like the Israelites, fails to understand that, although you suffer in the wilderness, you have already been delivered from your idols, from the Old Adam himself. Those idols which you left behind are only phantoms of a better life, a mirage in the distance, gods without any substance. Do not look back like the Israelites. Repent and daily cross that baptismal

Red Sea, drowning the Old Adam along the way. And do not fear being alone, for God has sent you His Israel and His Moses in the form of the Church and your pastor to walk you through the wilderness. Although you will die in the wilderness, the promised land awaits and into this wilderness goes before you Jesus, our Lord.

*O Almighty God, you delivered ancient Israel from Pharaoh through the Red Sea by your servant Moses and preserved your people in the wilderness, continue to preserve your Church in these last days by the hand of Your new Moses, Jesus the Christ, in the waters of Holy Baptism. Through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord. Amen.*



*Acts 13:38–39*

When Moses delivered the Israelites from Egypt, they were set free to worship God and to follow Him, to receive His commandments and experience His glorious presence. Yet in the wilderness, they despised God's deliverance and provision, grumbling in their hunger and thirst. They fashioned a golden calf and repeatedly rejected God's commands.

The former slaves had been freed from Egypt, but their sinful nature followed them into the wilderness. God's law given by Moses was good and holy, but Israel could not keep it as they should. The law could not free them from their sin, and sooner or later death would come to each one of them. We too need deliverance from sin, a deliverance that the law cannot give.

Jesus delivered us from sin's slavery by giving his precious blood for our forgiveness. He delivered us from death by His resurrection. For everyone who believes, death has become the doorway into eternal life with God. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we too will rise on the last day.

*Father, forgive us our sins for the sake of your Son Jesus. Nourish our faith by your Holy Spirit and lead us through death to eternal life. Amen.*

*Galatians 5:1*

For all our talk about the value of freedom, we sure do run into voluntary servitude with alarming eagerness. No sooner do we hear the good news that we have been delivered from our sin than we rush to find new masters to whom we can be enslaved.

It took the Israelites very little time in the wilderness to turn from marveling at God's miraculous deliverance of His people from slavery to grumbling about the insufficiency of His provision for them and the lack of creature comforts they thought they remembered. In the same way, we are so often tempted to respond to our freedom from sin by looking for other sins.

But the true freedom that Christ won for us is not merely the ability to choose another master. Instead, it is the freedom to live as God has created us to be. It is the everlasting fulfillment of realizing the very good for which we were designed all along: community with God Himself.

*Heavenly Father, you have delivered us from our slavery to sin and granted us true freedom to walk with You. Guard and guide us so that we do not run to yolk ourselves to another master but remain steadfast in the relationship restored by Your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

*Romans 6:15–23*

Far too often, we are our own worst enemy. Our sin-ravaged minds lie and say that sin is desirable, or that sin is no longer problematic due to God's grace. Today's text, however, shows us the truth. Thinking that the grace of God sets us free to sin is not freedom, but slavery. Rather than being slaves to sin, we who know Christ are slaves to righteousness.

Like us, the Israelites did not know what was in their best interest. After Moses led them out of Egypt, they grumbled that it would have been better to remain in bondage. Stephen even says that they rejected Moses as God's appointed leader and "in their hearts they turned to Egypt" (Acts 7:39). And what was the result of their rebellion and desire to return to Egypt? Death.

Today we still battle against death, as our Old Adam constantly seeks to submit as a slave to sin. But thanks be to God that, just as the Israelites were baptized into Moses, we have been baptized into Christ! Through faith, we are no longer enslaved to our sins, but to righteousness. This new slavery no longer results in death, but culminates in eternal life.

*Thank you, Lord, for deliverance from my sins. Grant that this deliverance would yield the fruit of righteousness, and sustain my faith unto everlasting life. Amen.*

*John 8:31–37*

What shall we say? Shall we say that we have never been slaves? Egypt wasn't so bad; there we sat around pots of meat. The devil whispers that we had it better in his house: 'What is sin? What is truth? Why should I confess?' But he lies. Egypt was slavery. The darkness of sin and falsehood is poor, miserable slavery; and in that slavery, death would have only delivered us to the second, eternal death.

So what shall we say? That we have sinned, and have been slaves—but now, we have been freed! We have been delivered to life! We have been baptized into holiness! We have passed through the water by the power of the Spirit, and therefore, we have died in Christ, and are washed clean of sin, and are also raised in Christ. Now our new Moses leads us, wandering, for just a little while, a few fleeting years, waiting in joyful hope for that day when we will cross the Jordan, being raised again to freedom that has no end. And the Truth will be manifest, for then we shall see Him, the face of our dear deliverer: Jesus.

*Father in heaven, by the blood of your Son, you have brought us out of sin and death. Lead us also out of this world into the blessed light of your face in the world to come, for the sake of Jesus. Amen.*

*Acts 7: 20–37*

Moses is one of the greatest men and prophets in the Old Testament, Exodus 33:11 records that God talked to Moses like he was a friend. Moses is the one who led the Israelites out of Egypt and received the Ten Commandments, which form the basis for everything that the Israelites do. And yet this is not what Stephen focuses on in his speech as he defends what he believes about Jesus Christ right before the Israelites stone him to death. Instead, Stephen focuses on how the Israelites rejected Moses and by extension God's laws. Yet even as the Israelites rejected Moses, he shared God's promise that God would send an even greater prophet to deliver His people. This promise came into being in Jesus who came to deliver the Israelites, but they also rejected him. However, even though Jesus was rejected by those he came to save, he died upon the cross and then rose again to deliver all people from the sin and brokenness of the world.

*Why, what hath my Lord done?  
What makes this rage and spite?  
He made the lame to run;  
He gave the blind their sight.  
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these  
themselves displease,  
and 'gainst Him rise. (LSB 430:4)*



## JOSHUA † PROMISED LAND

*Now Joshua, with Israel waged  
A war to win their land;  
Yet even there their foes would rage  
And try to take command,  
But see, that land which Jesus leads  
Us to, our promised home,  
Has no more foes, nor evil deeds,  
Where lambs with lions roam.*

*Genesis 12:1–9*

Christ is the promised one, the seed of Abram in whom all the nations would be blessed. Because Abram's faith was counted to him as righteousness, Abraham demonstrated that one must trust in God's promises. God calls Abram—the man later renamed Abraham—to leave everything he had ever known and to go into a new land replete with life. God promises to give him blessing upon blessing, including becoming the father of many, and all people would be blessed through Abram.

Trusting in the promises of God, Abram obeys and goes where he had been commanded. Upon arrival, he sees people already living there, but God appears to Abram, promising the land to him. In this place, Abram sets up an altar and sets up his tent in the surrounding countryside. The fulfillment of this promise may be found in Christ, in Whom all nations are blessed with eternal life. Because of Abram's faith, he was renamed Abraham, the father of many, and from Abraham's line came Jesus Christ our Savior. In His death, Jesus took the place of Isaac as a sacrifice to cleanse not only the people of Israel from their sins, but the whole world.

*Lord, you bestowed a promised land to Abraham. Generations later Joshua brought the people of Israel into that promised land, where you blessed your people. Just like the people of Israel we wait for the promised land and of the New Creation. Keep our focus on you as we await the return of Christ. Amen.*

*Genesis 15:1–21*

Holy Scripture is clear; we are sojourners here in this world as we await our entrance into our eternal Sabbath rest. Just as God brought Abraham out of His homeland, so too has he called all of us from our complacent fallen state to follow wherever His promises lead. God does not spurn Abraham's impatience in the promise being fulfilled, but instead credits His ensuing trust as righteousness. We who are strangers on this earth wait earnestly for our deliverance from the bondage of sin and death just as God accomplished with Abraham's great nation, bringing them out of Egypt into their Promised Land. But Jesus Christ, the ultimate heir of Abraham, has already transferred us from this plane of darkness to our Promised Land of eternal life. He claimed us as His citizens in baptism and credited our trust in His perfect obedience as righteousness. The innumerable stars that Abraham beheld were not only a picture of His fleshly descendants but encompassed all the saints who have also believed God's promises. The Church is Abraham's ultimate legacy, those united in Jesus Christ, the seed through whom all the world is blessed.

*O God Most High, you credited Abraham's trust in your promise of a great nation as righteousness. Help us to remember in the dark days of our sin the perfect righteousness of your Son transferred to us in the hearing of your gospel promise so that we may continue in the blessed hope in our eventual entrance into eternal life. Through the same Jesus Christ Your Son Our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.*



*Numbers 14:24–48*

Wicked spies gave a terrifying report, and Israel believed it over the promise of God. When Joshua and Caleb proclaimed the beauty and goodness of the land, the people sought to stone them. God condemned the spies and all who grumbled against the Lord to death. However, God preserved Joshua and Caleb, and their feet trod on the ground of promise.

Man is naturally born into blindness, believing wicked things in his heart about the promises of God. Instead of seeking His Kingdom, natural man worships the idols of this world. For this, man deserves eternal death. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, faithfully walked through the desert of this fallen world. He did not grumble against God, nor did He give false reports of paradise. On the third day, He rose again, and His feet walked victorious upon the Earth. All that repent and believe in Christ are in Christ and walk in victory with Him.

*Heavenly Father, send Thy Holy Spirit, that by His power we would hate the false reports of the deceitful world, and would instead walk in the Good News of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen*

*Joshua 3:7-19*

Creation, the Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the New Testament authors and church fathers speak of all these events as images of baptism, where the Holy Spirit brings us out of death into new life through the washing of our sins. Yet, this reading especially connects us to Christ. The Israelites in Joshua 3 have come from spending 40 years wandering in the desert, up to the Jordan River, and into Canaan to fulfill God's promise to them. Jesus, whose name in Hebrew is the same as Joshua's, went into the Jordan to be baptized. God the Father made himself known, along with the Holy Spirit in the form of the dove, and after baptism Jesus went into the desert to wander for 40 days. These similarities are not by coincidence. The promise God keeps to Joshua is the one he made to Israel, that they would become a vast nation in the Promised Land. Yet, the promise God keeps in Jesus' baptism is an even greater one, it is a promise he made to all people when Adam fell, the promise that He would send one man to redeem the sins of all people.

*God, we praise you for your faithfulness to the promises you make us. Thank you for the physical way you give these gifts to us in baptism. Amen.*

*Revelation 21:1-8*

To anyone who has ever been hurt or appalled by the world around them, this is a comforting reading. But anyone who delights in this world, this reading is uncomfortable. I imagine you can relate to both. The new heaven and earth are comforting, but losing the old one, is uncomfortable. A comforting yet uncomfortable truth. But that is always our response to the Gospel. We prefer the law. To trust ourselves and our own understanding. Trying to create our own paradise but ending up with a tomb.

But Jesus has done it all on the Cross. He is the end of our death in sin, and the beginning of our new life as God's children. The day will come when we enter this promised land with no pain or tears, for all evil will be gone. Yet now, we struggle. We doubt God's promises and miss the comfort of our old tombs. Yet already Jesus gives Himself as the spring of eternal life whenever we thirst for life and righteousness. Because of Him we can live in this dying world until we come into the next. He sustains us, here and there, from the beginning to the end. Amen.

*Lord Jesus, your tomb is the true gateway to paradise. Teach us to reside with you in death, so that we may also reside with you in the Kingdom to Come. Amen.*

*Hebrews 4:1-14*

One day, I would like to rest. Here in St. Louis, we're coming up on Reading Week, where at the very least, the campus rests from class. Despite the break in the schedule, the idea of rest is still elusive. Call Day approaches, and with it, the anticipation of vicarage assignments and first calls. Does that day give us rest? Commencement follows shortly after. Does the conclusion of a school year give us rest?

The rhythm of the academic year grinds us down. Like the children of Israel, we may grumble as we wander through the wilderness of classes, papers, and exams. Joshua may have led the Israelites into the Promised Land given by God, but the Israelites still lacked rest. They still grumbled. The writer of Hebrews tells us that, "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (v.9).

Our Sabbath rest is found in the Word, that very Word that is living and active. As this week ends, we strive for that rest! We run to God's Word and find our rest in Jesus. We find our rest in hearing that Word proclaimed among the people of God. Rest in the Word.

*Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free. From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee. Amen.*

*Matthew 3:16–4:11*

In rescuing the Israelites from Egypt, God claims them as His chosen people. Through them He will reveal Himself to the surrounding countries with the identity He reveals to Moses in Exodus 34:6–8. But the Israelites wandered, forsaking the Lord for Egyptian gods rather than trusting Him to provide for them and give them the land that He promised to their forefathers. Their wandering resulted in the promised land being kept from them for forty more years.

In Jesus' Baptism, the Father claims Jesus as His "beloved Son." Satan attacks this very identity when Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days. The Israelites lost sight of their identity, but Jesus did not. In overcoming temptation, He shows that He did not come to glory in His own Sonship, but to die that we too might become sons.

We receive this sonship in baptism. Here we die to sin and live to God (Rom. 6:11) as we live in Christ and He in us (Gal. 4:1–7). Now we look ahead to the promise of the resurrection that was won for us in Christ.

*Father in heaven, you have granted us adoption as sons through the death and resurrection of your Beloved Son Jesus Christ. Keep us in your grace throughout our times of wandering and temptation that we may joyfully watch for Christ's return when he will make all things new, through the same Jesus Christ, your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*



## DAVID † KING

*When foes would come, God's people need  
A king whom they could trust,  
Yet David failed to rule and lead;  
Because he fell to lust.  
Sin, death, the devil rise to fight—  
Unholy trinity!  
But lo, our King leads us with might  
And gives us victory.*

*1 Samuel 8:1-9*

The King is dead. Long live the King! We may not be so bold to say that we don't want God to be the King of our lives, but some moments suggest the desire for new headship. This is most commonly found when we disagree with God's timing. I didn't get the job I wanted, and I should have gotten it. The guy I liked rejected me, and he should have said "yes." A family member passed away, and they shouldn't have. Moments like this make us want to put someone else in charge of our lives, and most commonly, we want it to be ourselves. We even see that in the death of Jesus. Pilate says, "Here is your king! Shall I crucify him?" They respond by saying, "He is not our King. He is dead! Long live the King; King Caesar!" (John 19). But thanks be to God, he died. If it weren't for the death of our King, our wages would be sin and death. The King is dead, but he didn't stay there. He was raised from the dead so that we can say, "Long live the King, King Jesus!"

*Dear God, you are the King of our lives. In moments, we forget or disagree with your decrees. Lord, forgive us when we try to put an idol in the place of your role in our lives. Let us look to Jesus, Your Son, our King, who was raised high for all to see on the cross. Whenever we forget or disagree, point us to the King and have us say, Long Live the King. Amen.*

*1 Samuel 8:10–22*

Who can't relate to the Israelites? They're calling on the Lord to give them a king; someone to make them like all other nations, someone to judge, and lead, and fight. If we're honest, are these not all things we wish for as well? How often do we place our faith and trust, not in God, but in earthly leaders saying, "Maybe this or that leader will finally bring peace, security, prosperity, etc." Though we're reminded every Sunday, we continually forget who our true King is. And we, like the Israelites, find ourselves, not turning our faces to God, but to the next leader with the most "potential" to improve our lives. Indeed, we bear the very same pride as our ancestors. And yet, in spite of it all, God loves us and serves us through these leaders, however flawed they may be. After all, He is a God of means! He works through Word, water, bread, and wine to deliver his grace, won for us on the cross, by Christ and Him crucified. In the OT, God worked through many, like the great King David, who pointed to Christ. And now, having redeemed the whole world in Christ, He works through our leaders in this age as well, for you!

*Heavenly Father, please continue to remind us of our sinful condition so that we might not lose sight of Christ and His sacrifice. Humble us and cast out our pride, driving us to Your word and sacrament, that we might trust only in you, our true King, who loves us and watches over us in all that we do. Amen.*



*1 Samuel 16: 1–13*

The prophet Samuel, by the Lord's inspiration, passed over all others as they were not God's chosen. God did not choose Eliab, Jesse's eldest son of great stature, the heir according to human measure. Neither did He choose Abinadab, a brave soldier in Saul's army, nor eight other sons of Jesse. 'For the LORD sees not as man sees.' God chose the unlikely David, Jesse's youngest, a mere shepherd boy; the least according to human measure was anointed as King of Israel and received the Holy Spirit, thus marking his reign. At the advent of His Son's illuminating reign, God sent John to bear witness about the light. John did not yet know Him, but he knew to baptize and proclaim the coming of one upon whom the Spirit would descend like a dove, thus marking His reign as Christ our King. God, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man can see, has revealed Himself in the flesh. The Logos, His Son, has become man and, in a way that escapes our grasp, has shown the fullness of His Father's love on the cross. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

*O Lord, you anointed David to be King of Israel as a foreshadowing of the baptismal anointing of your Son Jesus Christ our King. Grant us to be ever mindful of our own baptism, through which you, by Your Word, filled us with the Holy Spirit and called us your own. Be with us in the midst of our bright Lenten sadness so that we might be drawn closer into you, and you closer into us. Through Jesus Christ, your Anointed. Amen.*

*Matthew 2:1-12*

Everything David does is a foreshadow of what Christ shall do. David was a great king; Christ shall be the perfect king.

David was a mighty warrior who has slain countless men in battle, Christ has slain death itself. David secured peace for the kingdom of Israel in his time, Christ has secured everlasting peace for the world through the forgiveness of sins for all believers in our time. So whatever David had done, Jesus will do in a more complete way. Even David's birth in the town of Bethlehem is a foreshadowing of the birth of Christ in that same town. From this town would come a shepherd much greater than David, one that would give up His own life for His flock.

*Merciful Lord, out of the town of Bethlehem you would begin your journey in this life and come as one who was much greater than your servant David. Strengthen our hearts and minds that we may acknowledge you as our true king. Shepherd us and reserve a place for us in your holy kingdom. Amen.*

*John 18:33-40*

In this series, we are looking at examples of Old Testament figures that point us to a greater fulfillment in Jesus. Next to Moses, one of the greatest figures we point to in the Old Testament is King David. Israel's mightiest King who was said to be "a man after God's heart." He was a great ruler who brought Israel together and conquered many of their foes. He was what we all think a king should be. For Israel, the Messiah was coming and he would be an even greater David, a King who would rule over everything and free them from their enemies and bring about a new age of Israel's rule. Yet we see a very different scene in John. Jesus stands before Pilate as a man who is anything but a king. He is bound in chains and led away to stand before the Gentile ruler Pilate who believes that he is in control of what will be Christ's fate. Jesus tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world. It is a heavenly one. One we all share in as the church today. The kingdom that will have no end. The one for which he gave his life. He conquered our greatest enemies on the cross and brought us everlasting peace.

*Heavenly Father, you sent your son Jesus to be our perfect heavenly king. He conquered our enemies' sin, death, and the devil when he gave his life on the cross yet he rose again to give us eternal life. During this time of Lent, remind us of our king's sacrifice for us so that we may also be people after God's heart and love those around us. We ask this in Jesus' perfect and blessed name. Amen.*

*John 19:1-16*

A king is marked by two things: beauty and power. He shows off wealth and stature by delicacies and ornaments no one else can buy. He reigns over a great kingdom, protecting his people and executing justice and the common welfare of all. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a true king as prefigured by his ancestor David; yet, he does not rule as we might expect. He truly has beauty and power; but, his beauty is in sacrificial suffering and his power is in bearing the sins of the whole world. The evangelist John vividly displays the regalia of our Lord Jesus Christ: the thorns twisted into a crown, the mocking honor of Pilate and his soldiers, and the denial of Jesus' reign from his own people. He also confesses the true power of Christ: bearing this mockery and shame, suffering and torture on our behalf. Although it might seem like irony to us, our Lord is truly most beautiful and most powerful in these very scenes. Jesus shows his true kingship in front of Pilate and for all those shouting for his crucifixion. Jesus affirms in his actions what was testified of him, "The King of the Jews."

*Dear Lord Jesus Christ, Almighty and Most Merciful King, help us to delight in your true beauty and power; form our hearts and our minds to boast in your shame and suffering for our sake; humble us to receive your suffering in our place; open our mouths to testify to your reign in all times and places. To you alone be all glory, power, and might as you reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God eternally. Amen.*

*Revelation 19:11–16*

See how the hosts of Israel go forth in pure white robes on pure white horses with their great Captain on a pure white horse. No doubt, His eyes are white-hot and His head decked with the most flawless jewels. The scene screams into your eyes like the strength of the mid-day sun and it's nearly impossible to make out the shapes if not for one wash of color in the midst of the conquering band. The Word of God, clothed with the baptism of blood, going on to war, to claim kingship over the whole universe. He goes to tread the winepress of wrath, to drain the cup of punishment so fully that the name on His blood-washed robe is barely legible and the garments of the King look like the work-clothes of a slave. What wonderful mystery! The conquering King lays aside His royalty that His children may lay aside their shame. He wears red that we might wear white. He is conquered that we would conquer. But the mystery still that this defeat is His victory. The victor's robes are painted with His own blood. His glory is blotted out that it might shine in its fullness.

*King of kings and Lord of lords, you suffer Your church to be humiliated on this earth just as you were. Yet You make her to shine eternally with your glory. You have drained the cup of wrath and given us to partake of the cup of immortality. Wash us again today and make us to stand with your pure heavenly host at the last that we might forever serve and worship you. Amen.*



## JONAH † PROPHET

*Once Jonah, fleeing from God's plan,  
Was swallowed in a storm;  
The fish held him for three days' span,  
Then spat him on the shore.  
Now Jesus sought to do God's will,  
So He was swallowed too—  
The earth held him for three days till  
He rose to life anew.*

*Jonah 1:1–6*

Who can hear the voice of God and live?

The Israelites cowered at the foot of Sinai, unable to stand the condemnation inherent in the mightiness of God. We are sinners. God's voice is righteous, and omnipotent, and beautiful. No one can withstand His purity.

But Jonah heard the voice of God and lived. Moreover, Jonah heard the voice of God and disobeyed. He scrambled down the hills of Judah, rolled to the coasts of the Great Sea, and was happily gobbled up by a ship heading to Tarshish. Jonah voluntarily laid down in a deathly sleep, wishing to do anything but hear the voice of God.

But God's word has not come to kill, nor has it come to drive us to suicide. The voice of God—righteous, omnipotent, beautiful—has come to bring us life! It brings us to repentance! Indeed, His voice exhorts us nearer and nearer, as sweet tones push the nails into our own hands, and pull us out of the Arimathean's tomb. Therefore, arise, call to your God. May He have mercy on you, and speak again. He is your only hope.

*Almighty God, you sent your Word, Jesus Christ, into the world to save sinners. Open the ears of my heart, that I may comprehend the deep reach of your love and trust in your Word forever. Amen.*

*Luke 13:31–37*

Jesus is on His journey towards Jerusalem, preaching and teaching in the villages and towns of the rule and reign of God. Pharisees come to Jesus the hour he was teaching and tells Him to “get out,” for Herod wants to kill Him. This warning by the Pharisees is strange, rushing Jesus out of their country, rushing Him to Jerusalem. Jesus called Herod a fox and explained with a “Behold!” He casts out demons and brings to completion healing today and the next day, and on the third day He fulfills and finishes His goal, the final course of what we know as the prophets foretold and fulfilled. The salvation that comes in the crucified and buried Son of God, Resurrected from the dead on the third day. So, Jesus goes His way to Jerusalem to die, as a prophet cannot perish away from Jerusalem.

The lament over Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, from where the prophets are killed and stoned by idolaters and forsaken by the enemies of the Lord YHWH’s Holy One and prophets. Jesus prays the psalms as He speaks of the forsaken House of Israel. As He goes to die for sinners, His desire is to gather those unwilling underwing.

*Holy Lord Jesus, we shout Hosanna with the psalmist and prophets of old. You are the Blessed One who comes in the Name of YHWH, for your face shines upon us, may your Name be extoled among us as your House. Amen.*



*Jonah 1:7-17*

Have you ever been pulled over with your car? When a cop pulls someone over, there are often a list of questions that are asked of the driver: ‘Do you know why I pulled you over? Do you know how fast you were going? May I ask where you are heading?’

In the text from Jonah, the LORD had just caused a storm to begin on the sea. It was so bad, that the boat was threatened to break up. The sailors woke Jonah from his slumber, and they asked him questions. “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” Jonah answered them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” What a confession of faith!

In this Lenten season, we make this same confession. We remember that our Lord, the God of heaven, who made the heavens and the earth, is the Lord who grants us strength and protection. Yes, the Lord supports us in all dangers and carries us through all temptations. He does this so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.

*Almighty God, you know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*Matthew 12:38–42*

It's a funny thing how one simple sign changes how one lives. People look at the stock market for signs that will tell them to invest—or divest. Others look to the sky and choose to go out or stay in depending on what the weather looks like. Even our commutes are impacted by signs of traffic jams, broadcasted straight to us from the news feeds on our phones.

The sign of Jonah, which Jesus fulfilled in an even greater way, was one the Pharisees missed—but we should not. During this Lenten season, we are called to look to the greatest sign of all: the death and resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection from the dead that Easter morning shows that He alone is the one true Lord and God. Because Jesus died and rose again on the third day, we too shall be raised in a resurrection like His. It promises that our Christian faith is not in vain—but that we live as a people with a living hope. And it means that our lives should be shaped by the Word of God in all that we do as we live in the now awaiting the not yet of everlasting life.

*Dear Jesus, I am thankful for your innocent death and glorious resurrection on my behalf. Let this sign be what gives me hope and guides how I live in faithfulness to you in all things. Amen.*

*Jonah 3:1-5*

You hear your pastor faithfully preaching God's word when you go to church. In that Word, you hear how God is concerned for all people, even those you might think do not need concern. Many of us have heard about a long-ago washed-up prophet named Jonah. God's mission for Jonah did not change after his display of faithlessness. God loved the people of Nineveh, and it was his will to send his prophet there even though Jonah was ready to write them off. After the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, instead of fleeing, he arose, went to Nineveh, and preached, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Through that faithful preaching, the wicked Ninevites heard the Word, and the Holy Spirit convinced them God would bring judgment upon the city. They believed and repented. God's judgment was stayed. He showed His love and mercy to Jonah and the people of Nineveh. Just as the sign of Jonah points to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, we learn in God's word that Jonah's mission of preaching to the Ninevites also points to Christ, showing God's love and mercy, calling all people to repentance and faith.

*Lord, through the preaching of your Word we hear your Law and Gospel proclaimed. Give us receptive ears to hear your Word, that we may take them to heart and embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. We pray this in your Holy name. Amen.*

*Luke 13:1–15*

The world tells us that some sins are considered worse than others. This can lead us to believe that certain sins are unforgivable. Maybe you have guilt about something that you have done in the past that you think is unforgivable. Perhaps you lied, betrayed, or hurt someone. Because of our shame, we try to hide our guilt, but it ends up eating us on the inside.

You might be scared and think that confessing your sin will bring you even greater despair. But in today's text (Luke 13:1–5), Jesus calls us to repent and reminds us that there is forgiveness in Him. Jesus does not want you to perish. By confessing and repenting, you will not lose your life, but you will gain it.

No matter how big you think your sin is, there is forgiveness in Jesus; for Jesus, no sin is too big. As Therese Lisieux said, "I know that all that multitude of sins would disappear in an instant, even as a drop of water cast into a flaming furnace." Jesus took on all our sins, including yours and mine, by dying on the cross to give you life. In Jesus, you will not perish but you are forgiven and made alive!

*Lord Jesus, there is no sin too big for you. Forgive us all our sins and strengthen us against temptation. We pray this in your Holy name. Amen.*

*Jonah 3:6–10*

Jonah was sent to Nineveh to prophesy destruction against its inhabitants because of their wickedness. When the king of Nineveh heard this, he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself in sackcloth and sat in ashes. He decreed that all the inhabitants of Nineveh abstain from food and drink, be covered in sackcloth, and call out mightily to God. They repented and turned from their evil way, and God had mercy on them and relented of the disaster.

John the Baptist heralded the way for Christ by calling for repentance. Jesus willingly left His heavenly throne, was stripped of His clothing, was nailed to the cross, and called out mightily to God: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). God relented of justly pouring out His wrath on us, because He poured it out on His Son instead.

Repentance is an act of faith that trusts in God’s mercy. God has declared a spiritual disaster to all who do not repent of their sin, which is an act of unbelief. Repent! Turn from your sins and behold the steadfast love and abounding mercy of God: Christ’s blood poured out for you on the cross.

*Merciful and Loving Father, by the atoning blood of your Son, you relent of the eternal disaster I justly deserve because of my sins. Grant me a repentant heart that faithfully trusts in your mercy, that I may thankfully receive the forgiveness of my sins. In the name of your Son who cries out for me, Amen.*



## MELCHIZEDEK † PRIEST

*Melchizedek, that ancient priest,  
To show their common Lord  
For Abram made a sacred feast  
With bread; with wine outpoured.  
And so too Christ for us prepares  
A feast of bread and wine:  
And so too in this meal He shares  
A fellowship divine.*

*Hebrews 7:15–22*

The first priest ever mentioned in Scriptures—Melchizedek—was described as “priest of God Most High”. This was long before the establishment of Israel’s royal priesthood and the Levitical priesthood. While his mention is brief, Melchizedek remains a real historical figure and forerunner of Christ, who is our one true and eternal Great High Priest. Melchizedek’s parents are never mentioned. Similarly, Jesus who was born of a virgin, did not have an earthly father and would not have been able to be a “legitimate priest” since he did not belong to the tribe of Levi. Yet Hebrew 7:15 says, “This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not on the basis of legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life”. All priests of the Old and New Testament were mortal men whose position as priest would eventually come to an end, but Jesus Christ true man yet true God does not have a beginning or an end, introduced to us a better covenant and a better hope, through His Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection.

*O Jesus, our Great High Priest, through your intercession on the cross, we have received forgiveness. Point us ever to you. Amen.*

*Genesis 14:17–20*

In the musical *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean is released from a nineteen-year prison sentence. Alone, dejected and weary he finds himself outside a building when a priest presents himself. He says, “Come in, Sir, for you are weary. There is wine here to revive you. There is bread to make you strong.”

In our text for today, Abram is traveling home from battle. He finds himself weary when a priest presents himself... Melchizedek. This mysterious priest of YHWH the God Most High prepares a simple meal of bread and wine. He says, “Come in, Sir, for you are weary. There is wine here to revive you. There is bread to make you strong.” He gives a humble feast and a blessing to strengthen and revive Abram.

There are physical and spiritual battles we fight. The enemy arms himself with deception, distraction, and discouragement. You might find yourself alone and weary, but a priest presents himself to you... Jesus, the Great High Priest. He prepares a humble meal of bread and wine. In this feast he gives you even more than bread and wine. He gives you His body and blood to strengthen and revive you. When you approach his table He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary. Come to me and eat of my meal. Come to me all who are burdened. Come and eat of my flesh and blood. Come and I will give you rest.”

*Jesus, our High Priest, you give us a meal of your body and blood. May it strengthen and revive us. Amen.*





## ISAAC † SACRIFICE

*On Mount Moriah Isaac lays  
Beneath his father's knife;  
But God provides a ram to slay  
To spare the young man's life.  
Now judgment hangs above our heads,  
But Jesus takes our place;  
Our sentence falls on Him instead  
And we receive God's grace.*

*Genesis 22:1–9*

I am no Father Abraham. When I was a child and heard my parents calling most often I would continue reading whatever book I had in front of me and hoped they would decide to call for someone else. It took me years to heed God’s call to the Seminary to the deaconess program. I often miss phone calls because I do not respond to the ringtone with urgency. I am stubborn and slow to respond.

Abraham, on the other hand, is very responsive. When God calls to him, Abraham says, “Here I am!” And he takes his only son up the mountain to sacrifice him. When Isaac calls out to his father on the mountain Abraham responds, “Here I am!” and testifies to God’s providence. When on the brink of sacrificing his only son, the Angel of the Lord cries out to Abraham and he stays his hand and responds, “Here I am!” His faithful (and prompt) response spared Isaac and the Lord did indeed provide a sacrifice, a ram caught in a nearby bush.

Praise God that Jesus, like Abraham, responds to the call with earnest intent. Where Isaac was spared, Jesus was not, for the redemption of all creation and salvation for all believers.

*Heavenly Father, you asked Abraham to give up his only son, but in your loving mercy you provided a ram to be sacrificed. When we look to the altar of the cross, we see that you did not spare your own Son on our behalf, so that we might receive forgiveness and life in him. We give you thanks for his sacrifice on the cross and for the grace you have given us. Cleanse us from our transgression by the blood of the Lamb. Amen.*

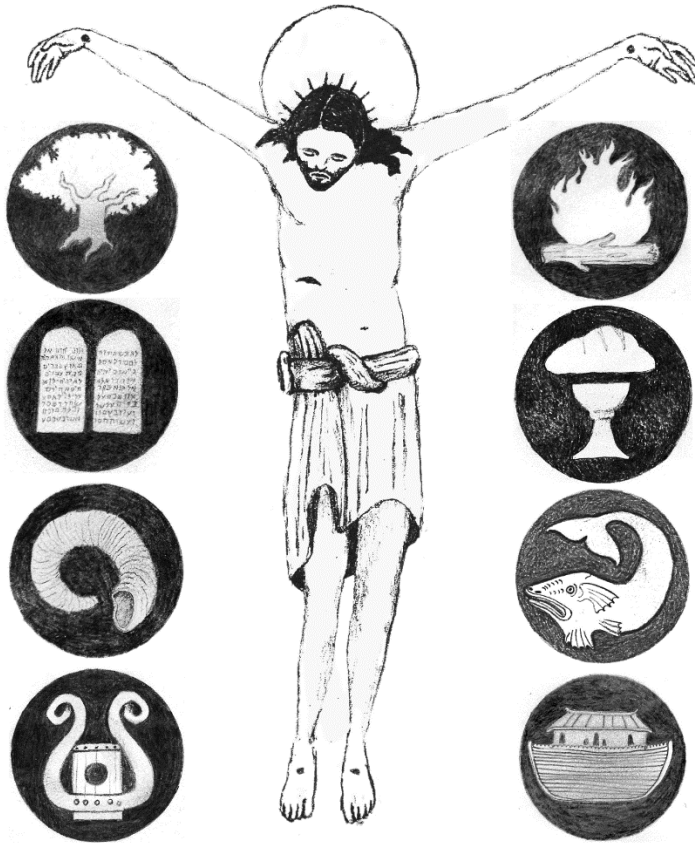
*Hebrews 11:17-19*

Abraham believed that God could keep His promises, even in the face of apparently impossible situations. This story is a vivid premonition of the supreme sacrifice that will be made by God in Jesus Christ.

We see Isaac's importance as a prefiguration of Christ, demonstrating the breadth of God's purpose for deliverance and the profundity of His love. God offered up His own Son as a perfect sacrifice for the transgressions of the world out of unending love for mankind, just as Abraham believed in the promise of God and stayed faithful even in the face of losing his son.

The means for both the Creator and creation to be reconciled was made possible by Christ's selfless sacrifice on the cross, which satisfied the demands of justice. God's provision of a ram to replace Isaac symbolizes the substitutionary atonement made by Christ, who voluntarily bore upon Himself the penalty that we merited. Thinking back on Isaac's near-sacrifice serves as a reminder of both the grandeur of the sacrifice made by Christ for our salvation and the inconceivable depth of the mercy of God.

*Dear Heavenly Father, rich in mercy and abounding in steadfast love, through the example of Isaac, give us a greater comprehension and appreciation of the selfless love of our Lord Jesus Christ; and give us faith like Abraham in the face of Christ's substitution on our behalf, by which we pray. Amen.*



*This revelation does not stand  
Alone in history,  
For Israel's past reveals the hand  
Of God for us to see.  
For God used prophets, priests, and kings,  
And shepherds, too, and slaves,  
To help us understand this thing:  
This cross by which He saves.*

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*Mark 16:1–8*

When studying a picture or a painting, the first thing I'm always interested in is the source of light. How is the scene being illuminated? Where is the light source located? Often, the light source isn't even visible in the picture. But I've learned a little trick. To locate the light source, simply look at the shadows. Because the shadows always point back to the light.

As we have been on this Lenten journey—as we have been studying the narrative tapestry of the Old Testament—we have hopefully discovered this truth there as well. All the shadows are pointing in the same direction—straight toward the Light. Toward the Risen Light of that first Easter morning.

What has this Light revealed? An empty tomb. And with it the realization that death is no longer the final brush stroke upon our lives.

Christ is the source of all light and life. But he is no longer hidden out of frame. He has painted himself into our human picture. Not because he wasn't already shining, but so that we could see him shining in all his fullness.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

*Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Risen Light to whom all shadows point. On this Easter morning, fill our hearts with the light of your resurrection so that we may not fear death but know with assurance that, just as you have risen, so also will we. For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

# BEFORE THE CROWD THE MOST HIGH GOD



1 Be - fore the crowd the most high God, Whose face no flesh could see,  
2 This rev - e - la - tion does not stand A - lone in his - to - ry,  
3 *Insert the stanza appropriate to the day.*  
4 In var - i - ous and man - y ways, God spoke to us of old,



Stood marked with wounds of scourge and rod, And frail mor - tal - i - ty.  
For Is - rael's past re - veals the hand Of God for us to see.

But now in these con - clud - ing days, He gives His Son—be - hold!



“Be - hold the man!” So Pi - late cried, But we re - ply and call:  
For God used pro - phets, priests, and kings, And shep - herds, too, and slaves,

For ev - 'ry sign and pro - phe - cy Here meets its fi - nal goal



“Be - hold our God!” Who when He died Re - vealed Him - self to all.  
To help us un - der - stand this thing: This cross by which He saves.

In Christ Who hung up - on the tree To save the sin - ner's soul!

## Adam

5 God gave His breath to dust and clay,  
And man with life was crowned,  
But he would sin—his Lord betray—  
And to the grave was bound.  
This path towards death, since Adam's fall,  
All flesh was forced to tread  
Till Christ would ford a way for all  
As firstborn from the dead.

## Moses

6 In Egypt Israel worked as slaves,  
But Moses by God's hand  
Would lead the people through the waves  
And to the promised land.  
Now we too had by sin incurred  
A debt, and slaves would be,  
Till Christ through water and the Word,  
Should make us free indeed.

**David**

7 When foes would come, God's  
 people need  
 A king whom they could trust,  
 Yet David failed to rule and lead;  
 Because he fell to lust.  
 Sin, death, the devil rise to fight—  
 Unholy trinity!  
 But lo, our King leads us with might  
 And gives us victory.

**Jonah**

8 Once Jonah, fleeing from God's  
 plan,  
 Was swallowed in a storm;  
 The fish held him for three days'  
 span,  
 Then spat him on the shore.  
 Now Jesus sought to do God's will,  
 So He was swallowed too—  
 The earth held him for three days till  
 He rose to life anew.

**Noah**

9 Once Noah built, when rains beset,  
 A boat which God contrived;  
 The waters drowned the world, and  
 yet—  
 Those in the ark survived.  
 So too behind a cross of wood  
 We hide when storms arise;  
 For Christ has made a promise good  
 That here salvation lies.

**Joshua**

10 Now Joshua, with Israel waged  
 A war to win their land;  
 Yet even there their foes would rage  
 And try to take command,  
 But see, that land which Jesus leads  
 Us to, our promised home,  
 Has no more foes, nor evil deeds,  
 Where lambs with lions roam.

**Melchizedek**

11 Melchizedek, that ancient priest,  
 To show their common Lord  
 For Abram made a sacred feast  
 With bread; with wine outpoured.  
 And so too Christ for us prepares  
 A feast of bread and wine:  
 And so too in this meal He shares  
 A fellowship divine.

**Isaac**

12 On Mount Moriah Isaac lays  
 Beneath his father's knife;  
 But God provides a ram to slay  
 To spare the young man's life.  
 Now judgment hangs above our  
 heads,  
 But Jesus takes our place;  
 Our sentence falls on Him instead  
 And we receive God's grace.





