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It Was Necessary that the Christ Should Suffer: The Passion of Our Lord Foretold

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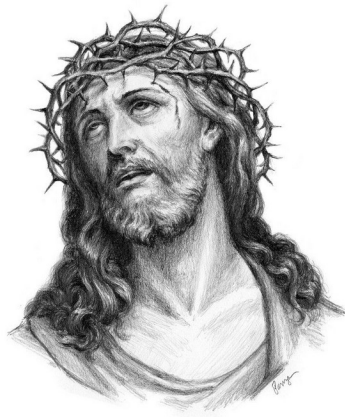
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*It Was Necessary that the
Christ Should Suffer:
The Passion of Our Lord
Foretold*



A devotional written by the students of Concordia
Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and Concordia
Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Lent 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Passion is not simply one episode out of many in the Scriptures, but the climax of one, unified message that runs throughout. All that comes before the Passion in Scripture leads up to it, and all that comes after it flows from it. Jesus Himself said that the whole purpose and content of the Scriptures is pointing to Him and His work of salvation (John 5:39, Luke 24:25-26).

Since all of Scripture centers on Christ, it should come as no surprise that there is much fruitful fodder for meditation on Christ's Passion even beyond the Passion accounts of the Gospels. Indeed, what is relatively tersely stated in the Passion accounts is more extensively meditated upon and traced with faith and awe in the prophecies and foreshadowings by which God promised the Savior and revealed what He would do.

In light of this, I encourage you to make use of this compilation of devotions, in which students at the seminaries meditate on passages that foretell or foreshadow Christ's Passion. Just as Christ's Passion is not one single episode in the Scriptures, but the whole sum and content of them, so also Christ's Passion contains within it not merely one part of our faith and life as Christians, but the entirety of it. It is as a reminder of this that we observe the season of Lent each year, in which we may refocus our attention from its many distractions in our lives and turn it to be fixed solely on Christ, our crucified and risen Savior.

What a blessing it is to meditate on our Lord's Passion and learn to dive ever deeper into the Scriptural testimony to it! The riches of Christ's Passion cannot be plumbed with a lifetime of pondering the Scriptures. May God lead you into an ever-deepening love and appreciation for the salvation of our Lord this Lent and throughout all your life!

In Christ,

Zachary Wessel
Spiritual Life Chairman, CTSFW

Ash Wednesday, March 5th

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” – Genesis 3:15.

As we begin our Lenten season, we hear of the conflict that was promised to come between the woman’s offspring and the ancient serpent. Generation after generation, offspring after offspring came and passed until The Offspring of the woman came in the flesh of Jesus Christ. That first Gospel promise of Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled in Christ. Though the serpent sought to bruise our Lord’s heel by tempting Him in the wilderness, bringing accusations against Him through the lips of the Pharisees, and trying to crush our Lord through the cross, it was by that very same cross that the serpent’s head was dealt its deadly blow. It was by that cross that the price of our sins was paid for by the blood of Christ. And it was by that cross, by the death and resurrection of our Lord, that we and all who believe in Christ do not have to fear our own deaths.

This day, as you receive ashes upon your foreheads with the words, “You are dust, and to dust you shall return,” gaze upon the cross of Christ and see the promised Offspring of the woman who has come and reconciled you to the Father, giving to you the certain promise that he will raise you from the dust on the Last Day.


O Lord, lift up our eyes to see Your promises fulfilled in Christ, that we may come to You and receive Your gifts of mercy. Amen.

Ryan Groh (CTSFW Sem IV)

Thursday, March 6th

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live” – Numbers 21:8-9

This passage is cited in John 3:14-15, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes [will in Him] ... have eternal life.” In Numbers 21, Yahweh heard the voice of Israel concerning the Canaanites and gave them into Israel’s hand. Then, Israel set out from Mount Hor by the Red Sea and went around the land of Edom, and the people became impatient and spoke against God and Moses saying, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food” (21:5). They loathed the “Bread from Heaven” (Exod 16; John 6:31-59). So, Yahweh sent fiery serpents to bite them and many died, so they confessed their sins to Yahweh through Moses, God’s representative.

Yahweh told Moses to make a fiery-bronze serpent and set it on a —standard/signal pole, and everyone bitten who looked at the fiery-bronze serpent “lifted up” would live. So, Moses did as Yahweh instructed. Those who were bitten, that did as Yahweh instructed, and looked at the bronze serpent, lived. So just as Moses “lifted up” the serpent, the Son of Man, Jesus, was lifted up on a cross and crucified for all sinful mankind, and whoever looks on/believes in Christ crucified, will live and have everlasting life.

Lord Jesus, You were lifted up as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness so that I may live. Help me proclaim Your truth of life in Your death to all people, so they too may live. Amen.

Nathan Randal Tritch (CSL Sem II)

Friday, March 7th

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.” – Exodus 12:5-6

Without Blemish. This was the requirement for a lamb which was to be sacrificed on the day of Passover to cover the sins of the Israelites, that the LORD might pass over their houses and bring no plague to them. It was not just any lamb that would do; the blood of a maimed lamb was not sufficient to cover their sins. No, only a perfect lamb was permitted to be sacrificed that day. Any Israelite who sacrificed a faulty lamb would’ve been under the same condemnation as the Egyptians, facing the loss of their firstborn son.

The requirement of a physically spotless lamb was not because such a lamb had more power to atone for sins. It was a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice to come; the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the lamb had to be perfect to be an acceptable sacrifice, it was absolutely necessary that Christ be without any sin whatsoever for His sacrifice on the cross to cover the sins of the world. For “everyone shall die for his own iniquity” (Jer. 31:30). A sinner could never die as a substitute for another; his death is the punishment for his own sins. It was only the faultless one, the one who deserved no punishment of His own, who could take on the sins of the world: Jesus Christ the blameless Son of God, who died a death that was not His own. He was to be our Passover Lamb.

Thanks be to God most holy that He did not leave us in our sins, but sent us a substitute to die in our stead. Amen.

Caleb Garman (CTSFW Sem II)

Saturday, March 8th

“The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.” – Exodus 12:13

When the average person hears the word “rescue,” certain things probably come to mind. Things like life preservers, antivenom, or men in uniforms with badges and guns. The last thing the average person thinks of is blood, because outside of an emergency transfusion, how does blood rescue anyone? It doesn’t. Yet Exodus 12 says otherwise. It says that for Israel, rescue from the Destroying Angel came through blood on the doorframe (v22) and the faith that grasped the promise of verse 13.

To human reason, this is so bizarre, but isn’t this how God works? Doesn’t He subvert our expectations? Our little ideas of how things ought to be. In His infinite wisdom and mercy, God does what He does, and He has His reasons. Who can say otherwise?

God could have easily used a sword, a gun, or some other implement that we might have preferred, but He uses blood. Blood staved off the Destroying Angel. Blood from His Son’s palms and forehead slayed sin, death, and the Devil. Blood at the altar, under the form of wine, forgives our many sins, including our expectations of what God ought to do.

The truth is that faith grasps the promises of God. Faith doesn’t mean we will understand why God does what He does. Faith grasps the words, “I will pass over you” (v13) and rests in the One who made this promise, the One who is true, the One who rescues you.

Lord of life, in your infinite wisdom and mercy you subvert our expectations. Teach us to grasp your promises knowing that your rescue is true. Amen.

Rory Fry (CSL SMP Vicar)

First Sunday in Lent, March 9th

“Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.” – Leviticus 16:15

Though often looked over as a mere arrangement and entanglement of ceremonial laws and specifications, the book of Leviticus is loudly Christocentric. Patterns, types, and shadows of our Lord abound to such a degree that multiple converge in this one verse. For indeed, Jesus Christ was the perfect offering for the sins of the world. His blood was sprinkled out on your behalf— of course you see the connection here! Remember also that Aaron, the high priest, was instructed to offer this sacrifice. Aaron’s task on the Day of Atonement previewed Christ’s task as the “merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17) by offering Himself on the cross. Where else is Jesus Christ in this verse? Where is He who tabernacled among us? You can probably see where this is going... Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle, where God dwells with His people. No longer does a veil separate the Lord from us, for we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

I thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for being the perfect sacrifice on my behalf. Thank You for offering Yourself on the cross as a propitiation for my sins, and for tabernacling among sinners to redeem us. Amen.

Brian Frank (CTSFW Sem II)

Monday, March 10th

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.” – Leviticus 16:21-22

What a joy it must have been to witness this ritual take place. To physically watch as your sins depart from you, as far as the east is from the west. From this event, we gained the word “scapegoat,” which is one who receives all the blame for an act, while the one who is truly guilty goes free. That ought to sound familiar! But unlike the failure of bulls and goats, which cannot fully atone for sin, and must be repeated each year, Christ, our true and better scapegoat, was a one-time sacrifice that is sufficient to cover the sins of all the world. If we weighed every sin of every creature that ever lived on a scale against His precious blood, then surely the scale would shatter before being able to measure the difference.

What joy is found now for us who believe in Him. For all who fight the daily battle against sin, who have been marred by the enemy and the flesh, can place their hope in the one true sacrifice, Christ our scapegoat, who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.

Heavenly Father, we graciously thank you for allowing us to be born in this time of redemption, and for your unending mercy that you give to us each day. Guide us together down the path of righteousness that leads to eternal life. Amen.

Logan Fraley (CSL Sem I)

Tuesday, March 11th

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.” – Psalm 22:1-2

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” cried our Lord Jesus while dying on Golgotha. The pain the Son of God suffering on account of our sins motivated even him to cry this out to his Father. If such a magnitude of temporal torment could drive the Son of God—who had the power to heal the blind, feed the hungry masses, and raise the dead—to make such a declaration, how much more painful of an eternal misery do we deserve apart from Christ? The severity of our due punishment is unfathomable, and yet, our Lord Jesus Christ suffered it entirely.

These inspired verses of David, written about 1000 years before Christ’s passion, gave Christ words to express his pain. They also aid us in understanding our own desperation and need for Christ; upon realizing the depth of his own corruption, an honest man will acknowledge his inability to be righteous and, seeking salvation, ask amid life’s tempest, “Why are you so far from saving me?” As Christ’s crucifixion preceded his resurrection, so too does a man’s similarly expressed sorrow over sin precede finding comfort in Christ. By also giving a man words to grieve his failure to fulfill God’s law, this psalm directs a man to remember Christ’s passion and to have faith that he suffered for our salvation.

O God, in understanding the myriad of emotions and tempests of life that move the hearts of men, you have given us many prayers by which to petition you for help. Guide us always to return to Your words in the Psalter for continual prayer, comfort, and growth; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Charles Schnell (CTSFW Sem I)

Wednesday, March 12th

“All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ‘He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!’” – Psalm 22:7-8

I did competitive speech in high school. One year, I presented a poetry program on despair, and clever as I was, I included portions of Psalm 22 as a part of the program, allowing me to share Scripture with a captive audience. Generally, I had no way of telling what kind of faith the other people in the room had, but I remember at one meet, a fellow competitor had included the lyrics of a praise song as a part of his program. Instead of appreciating the presence of a fellow Christian, I decided to take advantage of his presence, staring directly at him and pointing, with the most horrible, mocking voice my teenage self could muster, as I recited “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

Often, we read passages like Psalm 22:7-8, and we identify ourselves with the sufferer. We imagine ourselves being mocked and persecuted, which can be an appropriate thing to do, as we are promised we will face tribulation. But sometimes we need to step back, look at ourselves, and realize we are not just the persecuted, but also the mocker. We bring shame to Christ by our sinful words and actions no less than those who stood by His cross mocking and wagging their heads. We also can mock other believers in Christ and fail to encourage our fellow believers by our words and actions, rather discouraging them because they struggle in ways we do not understand. The world already constantly attacks our faith. We should not add to it.

Lord, though the world mocked you in your passion, you prayed your Father to forgive them. Equip us to use your Word of promise not to tear one another down but to build one another up, that we might constantly bear witness to you.

Julia Witt (CSL 2nd Year Deaconess Student)

Thursday, March 13th

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.” – Psalm 22:14-15

Things do not seem good at this moment. David speaks of how his enemies are overwhelming him. He is losing his strength. David seems to have given up and is ready to die right there. The battle seems lost. In a similar situation, we look at the cross where Jesus is on that Good Friday. We see Him beaten, whipped, and nailed as His life is drawn out of Him. It is then Jesus says the words, “I thirst.” In John’s account of the crucifixion, Jesus is offered the sour wine, but as soon as He finishes it, He gives up His Spirit and dies on the cross. We feel that this is the end of the story, David and Jesus have lost, there is nowhere else that this story can go. Or is there? David calls out to God for aid later in Psalm 22 and continues to fight His enemies. David’s call for aid is answered when Jesus is raised from the dead on that Easter morning. This gives us the hope that the battle has not been won by satan, but by Christ as He has defeated death and the devil. He has defeated our enemies; He has won the battle for all.

Dear God, we pray that You continue to be our strength in our days of trouble. Guide us through these days as we prepare for the Lord and keep our hearts and minds ever focused on You. In Your most holy name we pray, Amen.

Grace Babbitts (CTSFW 2nd Year Deaconess
Student)

Friday, March 14th

“For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet.” – Psalm 22:16

We know better than to stare at someone’s scars. Though scars mark healing from injury, they are reminders that something painful has happened.

This may be why the end of verse 3 of Charles Wesley’s famous hymn, “Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending,” catches us off guard: “Gaze we on those glorious scars!” The One pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities returns with “those dear tokens of His passion.” We might imagine that Jesus, the Lord of creation and firstfruits from the dead, would appear in a body free from any marks of violence or suffering. Yet, Jesus’ glorified body still has pierced hands and feet! “See my hands,” he said to Thomas (John 20:27)!

It may seem a bit macabre for us to gaze at, which is certainly not a new accusation leveled against the Church that regularly displays crucifixes or art or stained glass depicting the bloodied, wounded, crucified, and dying Jesus. These are not some ghoulish sideshow, though. On the Last Day, when death will finally be defeated, God’s people will indeed gaze “on him whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10), no longer in mourning for the same Jesus who died on the cross, flanked by criminals, and surrounded by sinners, but the One who “is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him” (Revelation 1:7). With John and the saints, then, we say, “Even so. Amen!”

Lord Jesus, may we continue to fix our eyes on you, even as you bear those dear tokens of your Passion, and may we exult you endlessly as worshipers ransomed from sin and death. Amen.

Mark Squire (CSL PhD Student)

Saturday, March 15th

“I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” – Psalm 22:17-18

As an illustration this passage encapsulates Jesus not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped (Philippians 2:6). Christ in His body is exposed completely. None of Him is hidden. He is so transparent that even His bones are seemingly visible, and the people cannot help but stare. It's like watching a video of a tragic accident and you can't stop watching even though you know it is wrong. Instead of looking away, they justify looking by gloating, mocking, and then casting lots for His clothing. It's all a silly game for them. The loss of His life isn't serious for them. It's easier to not think so much about it.

In Christ's exposure and nakedness, He joins us. As God clothed, fed, and nourished Adam and Eve, so too God clothed His Son in all glory and life after being totally exposed by sin and satan. Now through Christ's being further clothed by God, we will get to join this clothing of glory and life forever. We need not fear the loss of clothing nor the loss of life on account of Christ. Though our lives may be belittled or mocked, we know that our end is certain in Christ.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for losing all things, including Your life, for our sake. In the midst of our loss in this life, send Your Holy Spirit to comfort and lead us, so that we would not despair in our poverty, but cling to Your glory. Amen.

Jacob Garrison (CTSFW 4th Year Seminarian)

Second Sunday in Lent, March 16th

“He said to him, ‘Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.’ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half... When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.” – Genesis 15:9-10, 17

A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch pass between Abram’s sacrifices. Here, in the sealing of the Abrahamic covenant, the glory of the Lord (and not Abram) passes through the sacrificed animals, signaling that this covenant is entirely dependent on God and His promises. This sealing is an outward sign for Abram that he will become a great nation, that all nations of the world will be blessed by his Seed. Just as this old covenant was sealed at the cost of the life of the animals sacrificed, so too has the greater covenant been sealed at the cost of the life of the promised Seed. Just as God alone confirmed the Abrahamic covenant with Abram by passing through the sacrifices, God confirmed Christ’s sacrifice by “raising Him for our justification” (Rom 4:25). Just as Abraham did not “waver concerning the promise of God” (Rom. 4:20), may we ever remain firm in the faith of God’s promise of salvation for us through Christ Jesus our Lord!

Heavenly Father, you promised to bless all nations of the world through the Seed of Abram, re-named Abraham. That promised Seed, your Dear Son Jesus, has come, justifying all nations by the shedding of His blood. Just as you sealed your covenant with Abram, so too point us to the empty tomb and the seal which we have received through Holy Baptism, having received Your name; 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.

Chris Atlee (CSL Sem I)

Monday, March 17th

“And Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines.’ Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.” – Judges 16:30

Samson is often seen as a figure of masculinity. Because of this, woodcuts of his acts hang in the seminary gym, along with woodcuts of the crucifixion. It is right that these should hang together, for Samson is not only a figure of masculinity and strength, but many of his deeds are a foreshadowing of Jesus’ work for the salvation of man. Samson allows himself to be bound, he thirsts at the end of a great battle, and finally in his death he kills more Philistines than he did during his life. Likewise, Jesus allows Himself to be bound and tortured by those who would kill Him, Jesus cries from the cross “I thirst,” and in His death Jesus kills the power of Satan. Samson used the bonds which were given him by the Philistines to defeat the Philistines. Jesus uses the cross which was given to Him by Satan (through the betrayal of Judas) to defeat Satan. Satan no longer has power to accuse us before God. He is chained and now before God’s throne stands not the accuser, but the One who died our death for us, so that we might live eternally. The dead whom Jesus killed in His death were more than those whom He had killed during His life.

Lord Jesus Christ, by Your death You fulfilled the Father’s will and hindered every evil plan and purpose of the devil. Continue to give us strength to overcome the temptations of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, so that we might live with you to all eternity, as you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hunter Kinnison (CTSFWS Sem II)

Tuesday, March 18th

“For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled.” – Psalm 143:3-4

In 2013, my experience of Lent was different than any I had experienced before or since. Broken by lingering concussions and oppressed by sin, depression and darkness, I felt like there was no hope while I was crushed and defeated by death and hell.

While I experienced isolation in that season, I was not alone. And I was not the first to experience this distress. David, in many seasons of his life experienced suffering and isolation at the hand of his enemy, as he cried out in Psalm 143: “For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled.”

We are not alone in our sufferings. The eternal Son of God left his heavenly throne to be with us, and was “made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (Hebrews 2:17). Jesus Christ gave himself into the place of David, you, and me, suffering even to death that we may rise with him from the darkness of death to life everlasting.

Lord Jesus Christ, stay with me in the midst of this life’s suffering. May Your good Spirit guide me in Your way. Amen.

Joel Ripke (CSL SMP Student)

Wednesday, March 19th

*“Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers?
Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned, in whose
ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey?
So he poured on him the heat of his anger and the might of
battle; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it
burned him up, but he did not take it to heart.”* Isaiah 42:24-25

Who is the one who did not take to heart?
One thing is certain: it is the one who was the deaf sinner,
because hardened as rock is his ear and his heart,
He shut the way of the Word, he is broken and fallen apart,
And when the Lord gives him as the glory of the pillager
Then he suffers, takes his guilt and cries to the Lord.

Against the Lord we have sinned
like Israel, we did not walk on His way.
By our own blood we are unable to be redeemed,
and when towards death and hell we were deemed
the Father sent his Love, His Servant to save
to be propitiation, to shed His blood and to be Winner.

It was necessary that the Christ should suffer
The passion of our Lord was long foretold.
The prophet declares that the divine Son from His mother
Should be born, grow up, and walk to be slaughtered.
To this great message preached by Isaiah from old
We cling and pray it be always our mighty fortress.

*Lord Jesus Christ, glory to You for being our ransom. Thank You
for suffering in our place and paying for all our sins. Grant us
repentance and Your Holy Spirit that we always believe and
remain in Your love, to the glory of the Father. Amen.*

Doglas Behling (CTSFW M.A. Pastoral Exchange Student)

Thursday, March 20th

“Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: ‘Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.’” – Isaiah 49:7

This prophecy is about Jesus. In it, Yahweh reveals that His chosen Servant will seemingly fail in His mission to bring the Jews back to Him (verse 5). Although many Jews have embraced their Messiah, Paul laments that most of his kindred have not believed (Rom 9:1-3), a refusal which has continued to this day: Jesus is the One whom the Jewish nation abhors. Yet Yahweh reveals that His Son’s rejection by the Jews would prove the occasion for His becoming “a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth” (verse 6; Ps 22:27). Although God yearns for His beloved Jewish people to believe on His Son (Rom 11:1, 23), the calling of all Gentiles to faith in Him through the Promised Seed was always His plan (Gen 12:3). One of the strongest proofs of Christianity is that this prophesied calling has occurred historically in the spread of the Gospel (Zech 2:10-11)! Countless Gentiles, including great kings and rulers, have bowed their hearts before the crucified Galilean and will adorn the new Jerusalem with the glory of their nations (Isa 60:3, Rev 21:24). That you and I have the certain promise of bodily resurrection to eternal life by our Baptism into Christ is a part of God’s faithfulness to this prophecy about His Son.

Abba Father, we praise You for Your faithfulness to all nations, and to us, in Your dear Son. We ask that, as You have promised, His gospel would be received by many more Jews and Gentiles until, at His return, all His people will be resurrected to live at His side forever. Amen.

Wil Welch (CSL Sem I)

Friday, March 21st

“But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed. You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust. You have breached all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins. All who pass by plunder him; he has become the scorn of his neighbors.” – Psalm 89:38–41

In this pericope the Father, who is addressed in the second person, lays upon the Son, the anointed Servant, His wrath, displeasure, and punishment which mankind had deserved by his disobedience and sin. Here, the Father is the subject of six active verbs and one passive. The passive verb explains the rationale for the other six: “you [Father] are full of wrath.” And what does God do with His wrath? He condemns His Son: He (1) casts off and (2) rejects Him; He (3) renounces the covenant with His Son, namely, to be His God (Gen 17:7; Matt 27:46); He (4) defiles His Son’s crown of divinity in the dust that is the mortality of man; and He (5) breaches and (6) lays to ruin the city that is Christ’s body such that all who pass by plunder and ridicule Him as they did at His crucifixion. The number of verbs is also significant as the number six is the number of man and shows us what we deserve from God for our sin; but that which was reserved for man has been laid upon the Son of God. The one thing that no man can plunder from that desolate Servant—Our God!—is His atonement for our sin. This treasure can not be pillaged by any brigand or servant of Satan but is eternally preserved in heaven before the Father such that His wrath against man is eternally satisfied.

O Father in heaven, having poured out Your wrath upon Your Son in His passion and death, we beseech You to look upon us with mercy and satisfaction, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Conner Walts (CTSFW Sem II)

Saturday, March 22nd

“You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice. You have also turned back the edge of his sword, and you have not made him stand in battle. You have made his splendor to cease and cast his throne to the ground. You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame.” – Psalm 89:41-45

Psalm 89 depicts King David, the Lord’s anointed, who prefigures Christ. The first part of the psalm celebrates God’s exaltation of David, but the passage above foretells the humiliation that must follow. Often, when we look at the cross, we leap ahead to the symbol it will become of victory. But this psalm is a sobering reminder that we were once enemies of Christ, whose salvation and exaltation are dependent upon Christ’s suffering and humiliation.

As St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2: “You were once dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...following the prince of the power of the air...and were by nature children of wrath.” Wrath is what Christ the King should have executed on us. But God has “turned back his sword” and has “not made him stand in battle.” The defeat of the King in this passage is good news for us. Without it we would have been destroyed, and through it God has “made all his enemies rejoice.” For Satan and his followers, their joy over Christ’s death is short-lived because Christ lives. These words indicate that Christ’s humiliation and suffering open the possibility of eternal joy. The moment Christ’s throne is cast to the ground is the Incarnation. Hanging naked on the cross, Christ is covered with our shame. And as we pass by His cross, we plunder His treasure house of grace, life, and salvation.

Lord, we who were once Your enemies have been reconciled to You in the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank You for the undeserved gifts You have bestowed on us through Christ’s blood. Amen.

Nathaniel Pekari (CSL Sem I)

Third Sunday in Lent, March 23rd

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The Lord will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’” – Genesis 22:13-14

The Old Testament is filled with many types and shadows of the Christ. The atonement is woven throughout the pages of Holy Scripture. One example can be seen in Genesis 22:13-14. After obeying God and offering up his son, Isaac, Abraham was told by the Angel of the Lord to spare him. In the stead of Isaac, God provided a ram that would serve as the burnt offering. The text anticipates Christ’s passion in two key ways: Abraham setting forth his own son as a sacrifice and God providing an appropriate sacrifice for Abraham. The former demonstrates how God will offer His Only Begotten Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Though Abraham’s son was spared, God does not spare His Son. The latter shows that God provides the way of salvation, which is through the shedding of innocent blood.

In the anticipation of the Christ, God provided the Old Testament saints with pictures of how redemption would come to pass. In these latter days, God is no longer present with His people in types but in the flesh. And when He came in the flesh, He suffered, bearing the iniquities of the world. Genesis 22:13-14 is understood through this lens of Christ’s passion, which makes the Old Testament relevant to the Church today as the history of salvation which culminates in Christ.

Almighty God, we thank You for revealing the way of salvation in Jesus who was bruised for our iniquities; grant us the forgiveness of our sins on account of Your Son’s sufferings and death that we may gain eternal life; through Jesus Christ Your Son Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Joshua Hallock (CTSFW Sem I)

Monday, March 24th

“You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities. I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” – Isaiah 43:24-25

The people of Israel have become weary of their God. Their prayers have faltered. Their sacrifices have slipped and they fail to honor the LORD as they should. Instead of choice lambs, they pile up sin and iniquity before God. And now it is God who is weary: “You have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities.”

Have your worship and prayers faltered? Has your zeal cooled for God and his word? Have you failed to love the people God has put in your life? Do you honor God with your lips while your heart is far from him?

God in His boundless love and mercy does not falter. He does not lay down and give up His people for lost. He has given you His only son, who took the burden of your sin to the cross. Step by weary step, Jesus made His way to the place of crucifixion where He laid down His life for you. “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions...” His resurrection is yours. He has given you His life and Spirit. He gives you rest and refreshment, restoring your prayers, your worship, and your relationship with the triune God by His word of forgiveness. He has blotted out your transgressions, and He will remember your sins no more.

Lord Jesus, Your love for us does not grow weary. Renew us by Your Holy Spirit so that we may worship and serve You with our whole heart and a clean conscience as You reign with the Father and the Spirit forevermore. Amen.

Daniel Vanderhyde (CSL Vicar)

Tuesday, March 25th (Annunciation)

“Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the Lord, shall be yours. Nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem... But the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall burn their fat as a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the Lord.” – Numbers 18:15, 17

From the Law which God gave to Moses we can see a distinction made between creatures: some God calls unclean and others He calls holy. It should be no surprise to see that man resides in the unclean category. After all, were it not for the sinful nature of man, these sacrifices and ceremonies would serve no purpose. Like the unclean animals, mankind also requires redemption. Our redemption has come in Jesus who came not as an unclean creature, but as the Holy One of Israel. Nonetheless He was presented at the temple in Jerusalem and redeemed according to this ceremony as the firstborn of Mary according to His flesh. He is also the Holy One, and so it is Jesus who must be the sacrifice. By His death and resurrection, we see Him as the firstborn from the dead, the first man transformed, so that we who are redeemed by His blood may follow in His way. According to the death of Christ we are made to be dead to our own sinful flesh, our evil thoughts, our lawless works, and our baseless pride. According to His resurrection we are made alive as a new creation, younger brothers of the Firstborn of a holy generation.

Heavenly Father, as your Son Jesus opened the womb of the Virgin Mary we rejoice that He has likewise opened the grave, that we who have been redeemed by His Blood should not see death, but follow our Lord into everlasting life. Help us to hold fast to His works and merit, preserving us in His life, so that we may receive His resurrection. Amen.

Wednesday, March 26th

“Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? ‘It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.’ Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? ‘I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel’” – Isaiah 63:1-3

The “mystic winepress” motif is a lost treasure. Once a common theme across art and literature, the image of Christ bearing the weight of a cruciform winepress—knee deep in a vat of His own blood as it is wrung from his body—has fallen out of fashion. But Isaiah sees it clearly: It is Christ who stands in the winepress, “speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” It is Christ who may be called “splendid in his apparel.”

Our apparel reminds us that we have sinned. Since Eden, where garments were first tailored for the sake of sin and shame, every piece of clothing has been crimsoned with guilt’s stain. But Christ takes on our sin-soaked garments, and He clothes us instead with Himself. Having put on Christ, the blood covering us is not our own guilty blood, but His holy blood; wine from the mystic press.

“I have trodden the winepress alone,” says Jesus. The loneliness of His work is the best of news for us. He is the only one whose labors could yield an elixir that bestows forgiveness, life, and salvation. There is no other giver of such things. As the stained-glass windows in the Chartres Cathedral depict, the patriarchs planted the vine and the prophets pruned it, but Christ alone became the cluster of grapes crushed for our redemption in the winepress of His Passion.

Lord Christ, You alone have trodden the winepress for our iniquities. Cleanse us by Your holy blood, and clothe us with Your righteousness, that we may be counted among those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Amen.

Henry Eising (CSL Vicar)

Thursday, March 27th

“And if anyone again prophesies, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the Lord.’ And his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies.” – Zechariah 13:3

The Law demands that all false prophets must die. Moses writes that even if your own spouse or child entices you to serve other gods, your “hand shall be first against him to put him to death” (Deut. 13:6-9). But a god is anything that “you set your heart on and put your trust in” (LC I). How often do we set up idols in our hearts? How many times do we relax one of God’s commandments or encourage others to do the same? Are we Christians not all guilty of speaking lies in the name of the Lord?

But the Lord reveals that He will be pierced and will pour out “a spirit of grace” (Zech. 12:10), and He will open a fountain “to cleanse [us] from sin and uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). The One True Prophet, to whom we must listen, sacrificed Himself on the cross to forgive the sins of all false prophets and idolaters. Jesus Christ has given us His Holy Spirit of grace, cutting off the idols in our hearts and cleansing us from sin. The Spirit shows us when another Christian—or even ourselves—is leading people away from Christ alone and Him crucified for us. And the two-edged sword, the Word of God lovingly and gently pierces the one in error, warning that if his lies persist, he will lose his salvation and not live with Christ, to call him back to the truth and salvation of God.

Heavenly Father, You pierced Your Son for all our idolatry and false prophecies. Grant us Your Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts and enlighten our minds to understand Your Word and speak only what is true; in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eric Nuss (CTSFW Sem II)

Friday, March 28th

“On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies. He will not put on a hairy cloak in order to deceive, but he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a worker of the soil, for a man sold me in my youth.’ And if one asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your back?’ he will say, ‘The wounds I received in the house of my friends.’” – Zechariah 13:4-6

As a child, I loved playing with Legos, spreading them across the floor to build intricate worlds. I often poured out my Legos first thing in the morning, causing a noise like Niagara Falls that usually woke the whole family. When my parents confronted me, I would try to hide but would feel a sinking feeling in my stomach, knowing I had done something wrong.

When were you confronted for doing something wrong? Did you have a sinking feeling in your stomach? Throughout the Old Testament, false prophets claimed to speak for God and led the Israelites into idol worship. The sin of the people could not go unpunished, and God allowed the people to be conquered and taken into exile. The false prophets were exposed for their deceit, and they attempted to hide their involvement by claiming to be farmers. Your sins are known, even when you try and hide.

Jesus did not hide. He was given wounds through brutal beatings and crucifixion by the very people He had come to save. Jesus is whipped for crimes He did not commit. By his wounds, we are healed and made alive. As you are confronted with your sin, confess and repent. Jesus Christ has come into the world to save you through His sacrifice.

Lord Christ, You are the great Lawgiver and more than that, the great Savior. Point out my sins so that I may confess them to You and be forgiven by Your grace. We praise You for enduring the beatings on our behalf so that we might be redeemed through faith in You. Amen.

Dan Hampton (CSL Sem II)

Saturday, March 29th

“‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.’” – Zechariah 13:7

Was the death of Christ merely accidental, or was Christ simply a victim of circumstances? Here, the Prophet Zechariah gives a glimpse into the divine plans of God to place Christ on the cross. The sword of God arises against the shepherd, against the one who stands next to the Lord. It is not on the false shepherd that the sword falls. God does not direct the wrath against the Pharisees or Herod. It is in this that Zechariah says that God’s sword will fall on the Messiah.

It was not a mere accident that Christ was led to the cross. Before time began, God laid his plans for Christ to be led to Mt. Calvary. Judas, who would betray Christ, was born, the Roman empire was raised and flourished, Jerusalem fell under Roman control, the trees that formed the cross sprouted and grew tall, and the nails were forged. This all resulted in the suffering of the Shepherd, which reconciled us before God. It was the Shepherd, not the sheep, who absorbed the divine wrath of God. And by the suffering of this Shepherd, we have been justified before God and have hope of eternal life.

Almighty heavenly Father, we thank You for Christ’s sacrifice on the cross so that we may have hope of eternal life. Amen.

Aaron Wade (CTSFW Sem II)

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 30th

“Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.” – Isaiah 52:13

In a vacuum, this passage sounds like one fit for a king: “he shall act wisely...be high and lifted up...shall be exalted.” You can almost picture this wise servant of God: a king sitting upon his golden throne, looking down upon a sea of people bowing down before him, exalting him with their praise. This is how the world would expect a savior to come. This is how a theology of glory expects its savior.

But we are theologians of the cross. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, was sent to earth in human flesh, not to be a glorious king on a throne of gold, but to die. God sent His Son to be a servant who suffered. Jesus was high and lifted up, not on a throne in a palace, but upon a rough, splintery cross with nails driven into His hands and feet. Jesus looked down, not upon a sea of worshipers, but upon a crowd bristling with hatred and disgust. He was exalted with a crown of thorns, with insults, with the weight of the sins of the world upon his bloody back.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ...Jesus did this for you. He suffered, was high and lifted up on a cross, was exalted, took upon the world’s sins and died...for you.

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for the exaltation of Your suffering Servant, Jesus Christ, upon the cross. Help us in this Lenten season to reflect upon our Lord’s Passion, so that we would remember and believe that Christ suffered and died to take away every one of our sins; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tim Contreras (CSL Sem IV)

Monday, March 31st

“As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.” – Isaiah 52:14-15

Isaiah tells us “His appearance was so marred.” Upon these words we recall Christ's crucified body. After being flogged by Roman soldiers, carrying His own cross to Calvary, and being covered in blood, poured out from the crown of thorns, Christ is “beyond human semblance.” But we must remember that Christ was unrecognizable to us before the cross. His perfect and sinless form was a “form beyond that of the children of mankind.” Humanity had fallen so far from God’s righteousness, marred by our sins, and unable to keep the Sinai covenant. It was truly necessary for Him to mediate a new covenant. And so Isaiah tells us “he shall sprinkle many nations.” For a sin offering (Lev. 4), God demanded the sacrifice of a bull without blemish. The priest dipped his finger in the blood and sprinkled it before the Lord, and thus the sins were forgiven. Now our Great High Priest has sprinkled His own blood to atone for the sins of the world, reconciling us to the Father. St. Paul, then, took up Isaiah’s words, as a call to preach the Gospel to all who have “not been told” and “have not heard,” hoping to build others’ foundation in faith, that they would see and understand (Rom. 15).

Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, You delivered us from eternal suffering when You sprinkled Your own holy precious blood as an offering to atone for the sins of all. Now strengthen us to go out and deliver your Gospel to all nations, that all will see and understand Your sacrifice and have faith in the salvation gained through Your suffering and death. Amen.

Joe Musolino (CTSFW Sem I)

Tuesday, April 1st

“Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.” – Isaiah 53:1-2

Isaiah is writing in a time of political and social turmoil. The empire of Babylon is rising, and will later take over Judah. Isaiah writes about how this will happen, speaking about the conquest of Jerusalem and the impending exile. As he speaks, there has to be a part of him wondering: where is God in all of this?

Our world is not that different from Isaiah's. We may not have the Babylonians breathing down our necks, but we too live in a time where there is political and social turmoil. Everywhere we look there is suffering and death and brokenness. We look at all the things happening and we too wonder: where is God in all of this?

However, unlike Isaiah, we do not have to wait any longer. God has revealed Himself to us in His Son Jesus Christ. God came to us in the most unlikely way imaginable: a human baby who grew up like any other human being. There was nothing that made Him stand out, nothing glorious or majestic, nothing that would have singled Him out as the Word made flesh.

Yet, God's plan was revealed through Him. In the midst of all the suffering of the world, we look to Jesus who suffered, died, and rose from the dead for the sake of all the world. God's plan is not one that makes sense, but we cling to the promise given in Christ that one day we will live.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for not following the plans of men, but instead coming to us through Your Son. Help us to cling to You and Your promises. Amen.

Aine Molvik (CSL 2nd Year Deaconess Student)

Wednesday, April 2nd

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” – Isaiah 53:3

The prophet tells of a man who comes to his own, and his own do not receive him. Why is this? How can this man who is to save the people of God be despised and rejected? Because before the foundations of the world the Lord saw what would be and foreordained His Son to come into this world as a servant to serve His people. Christ our Lord came as man yet man did not receive Him, rejected by His people. Because of our hubris we esteemed Him not. Yet, it had to be so. It was when He took His place upon the throne of His cross that all righteousness was fulfilled. For on that cross the light of the world was placed upon the lampstand and the glory of the Lord shown throughout. On that cross was the mercy of the Lord who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love shown to His people. By His death we too die to sin and live to God. Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb who has been slain. To God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all the glory and honor, forever and ever. Amen.

Lord God, Father in heaven, in this time of repentance we thank You for sending Your Son into this world to bear our sins and be our Savior. Strengthen our faith in You that we may daily drown the old Adam so the new man may walk in newness of life; through Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jacob T. Shepard (CTSFW Sem IV)

Thursday, April 3rd

“Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.” – Isaiah 53:4

How would you feel if someone ignored or dismissed the sacrifice you made for their benefit, not even recognizing it was for them? That is what Isaiah describes in this text. The faithful servant Isaiah is prophesying carried the suffering of the people, yet they saw Him as merely afflicted. As if His suffering was His own and not for them.

Because of Adam and Eve’s unbelief, sin entered the world. Sin spoiled our relationship with God and each other. It brought suffering. In the original language, “grief” conveys pain and sickness, coupled with “sorrow,” which emphasizes deep emotional suffering. Since the Fall, grief and sorrow have been part of human life.

We all experience grief/sorrow through pain, struggles, or the loss of loved ones. Yet Isaiah 53:4 gives us hope: Jesus, the Second Adam, bore our sufferings. He took on our pains and sorrows, carrying them to the cross. Though He was rejected and unjustly condemned, He nailed all our iniquities to the cross.

Think about the emotional moment Jesus passed, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46). He grieved our grief, suffered our pain, and bore the weight of our sin. The sinless Savior endured it all to bring us healing and peace.

Our griefs are not the end, for one day God will wipe away every tear (Rev. 21:4). No more mourning, no more grief! Only eternal joy in Him!

So, in this Lent, let us meditate on Christ’s passion, and say, “He did it all for me!” so we can have eternal peace.

Lord, thank You for sending Jesus to carry our burdens! Amen.

Biruk Chiksa (CSL Sem III)

Friday, April 4th

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” – Isaiah 53:5-6

Without the Gospels and the Holy Spirit, this text would be confusing. In Acts 8, a God-fearing eunuch from Ethiopia reads this text, and he asks St. Philip, “Does the prophet say this about himself or about someone else?” The Holy Spirit provides in Philip a witness to the happenings in Jerusalem. We, in our Lenten journey, think ahead to the events foretold by Isaiah.

The prophet lists a trifold punishment of the Servant, whom we know to be Jesus Christ. First, the Servant is pierced. He is run through by the spear and nails, fixing our sins to the wood. Second, He was crushed. He is crushed, destroyed, made no more. Dashed to pieces on the rock, but Christ also is the Rock which crushes the iniquities and sins of the whole world. His heel gets crushed, but in doing so He crushes the head of the serpent. Finally, the Servant is burdened with the chastisement that we deserve. And yet by this burdening, we have peace. The burdening and wounding itself brings healing and peace to us, who receive these benefits.

Though we scatter abroad, turn our own way, and get ourselves lost, the Lord has laid upon His Son and Servant Jesus Christ all our iniquities, and so brings us back together around Him in His Word and Holy Supper.

O Lord Jesus Christ, pierced and crushed upon the cross for the transgressions of the whole world, grant us the peace which only You can give, and lead us out of our straying back to Your saving Word, trusting that we will join You in the eternal dwellings; to You, the Father, and Holy Spirit be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

H. Samuel Scheltens (CTSFW Sem IV)

Saturday, April 5th

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for transgression of my people?” – Isaiah 53:7-8

“A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth, The guilt of sinners bearing;
And, laden with the sins of earth, None else the burden sharing;
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint, To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer; He bears the stripes, the wounds, the lies,
The mockery, and yet replies, ‘All this I gladly suffer’” (LSB 438.1).

What a pitiful, helpless lamb described in this passage of Isaiah! Yet this Lamb is not just an innocent animal—He is a person who willingly takes on this role for the transgressions of the world, and that person is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. Perfect, unblemished, innocent, and blameless, Christ is sacrificed in our place, on our behalf. The Love of God is on full display in Christ’s suffering: His silence before His accusers, His defenselessness, His total submission, and His rejection from His own people.

What do we sinners receive in return? Forgiveness once and for all, reconciliation with God, salvation, and eternal life! Through Christ’s death and resurrection, we are freed from sin and given the hope of eternal life. Now, as those dead to sin, and alive in Christ, we are called to reflect His obedience, faithfulness, and love. When facing life’s woes, let us remember Christ’s example of submission and trust in God’s will.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your wondrous love in offering up Your Son in our deserved place. Grant us strength and wisdom to live out our faith before the world, to Your glory and honor; in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Pamela Vue (CSL 2nd Year Deaconess Student)

Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 6th

“And they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in His mouth.” – Isaiah 53:9

There, on the cross on Mount Calvary, our Lord hung with the wicked, for the wicked. The sinless servant, that Isaiah foretold, had to go through the death that all unrighteous, wicked people deserve. All so that we, violent and deceitful men, would never have to taste such a death. The grave of the wicked is the last enemy that Christ had to overcome. It is the enemy that looms over every sinner in this world. Death is the consequence of our sin. Only the death of the righteous Son of God could free sinners from its clutches. So into death's clutches our suffering Servant goes. Only in His death can all things be fulfilled. But death cannot hold the sinless Christ. The tomb must give way. When He emerges from the tomb that fateful Sunday morning, He releases the death sentence that the grave once held on sinners. Now all who believe and are baptized have put on Christ's death and are given new life in Him. We proclaim His death until He returns to eternally wipe it away when we dine on His body and blood. “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15:54b-55, 57)

Heavenly Father, You sent Your sinless Son, Jesus Christ, to die the death of the wicked that we deserve to defeat death for us. Keep us steadfast in the faith that You have given us so that death can never have dominion over us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Joshua Bieri (CTSFW 2nd Year A.R. Student)

Monday, April 7th

“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’- the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter.” – Zechariah 11:13

How much is Jesus worth? What can He do for me? While such questions are rarely so crassly stated, they are nonetheless often asked. The words of the prophet which hearken to our Lord’s betrayal remind us of our pride, placing the LORD on a metric of utility as if it were something that could be measured. For those who crucified Him, Jesus was quite useful, a rogue political pawn to solidify their loyalty to Caesar. In our age, He might be the same for others, a tool rather than a master.

Yet we may be tempted to exclaim Jesus’ glory. Jesus is worth everything. He is much more valuable than thirty pieces! Yet, we may fall into thinking that we even have something worth paying. Like the prophet’s pay, our offering is thrown away and discarded much like our Lord himself. And yet, Jesus is not the only thing discarded. Our sin and iniquity are taken with Him, never to be seen again.

Some circles like to speak of cheap or costly grace. Such a dichotomy fools us into thinking that we must calculate the value of Jesus. In reality we must refuse to even count. Grace is not cheap, but free.

Christ Jesus, You were handed over and betrayed on account of our greed. Even now, we are guilty of instrumentalizing Your cross and resurrection for our earthly benefit, yet You freely gave Yourself on the cross for our eternal benefit. Help us, Lord to joyfully receive what You freely give. Amen.

Zachary Eshelman (CSL Sem I)

Tuesday, April 8th

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.” – Zechariah 12:10-11

We weep over the firstborn, the heir entrusted to lead the family. We mourn for the only child, the end of the family name. We mourn as those in the plain of Megiddo at the loss of the king, the kingdom, and the whole world to the sharpness of death and the forces of the devil. For we are the ones who have pierced Christ with our sins!

Yet we are not without hope. The Spirit of grace and mercy calls us to look on the pierced One in repentance and faith, just as Israel looked upon the serpent lifted up in the wilderness and lived. That Holy Spirit is poured out on us generously in baptism, the washing of rebirth which flows from the side of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

For He, the Firstborn from the dead, has reconciled us by the blood of His cross, and made us heirs, having the hope of eternal life. He has won the victory which rescues us from sin, death and the power of the devil, in order to take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven. There, in the New Jerusalem, He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and turn our mourning into joy.

Heavenly Father, You gave Your only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish. Graciously pour out Your Spirit upon us so that we look upon Him whom we have pierced and find forgiveness, life, and salvation in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with You in Your kingdom now and forever. Amen.

Zachary Stuckwisch (CTSFW Sem I)

Wednesday, April 9th

“Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. For I hear the whispering of many – terror on every side! – as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.” – Psalm 31:11-13

Despair. Discarded. Discouraged. These are just some of the words that describe the feeling of David as he is being hunted by Saul’s army. He feels this sense of demise and abandonment because of His situation. It is a feeling that can be all too real for us especially during this time of examination during Lent. When we examine ourselves, we feel this same way as though we are a “broken vessel (vv. 12).” A right way to feel as we examine the Law in our lives.

But David does not stay in this feeling. He does not stay in the pain of his situation. Instead, David looks to the One who has been with him the entire time. Even as evil ones scheme, David says this in verse 14: “I trust in you, O Lord.” He makes a confession of who God is because he knows what his God can do, does, and will do. In verse 15 David says, “My times are in your hand.” David is putting his trust, his situation, his sin, his life into the hands of the Savior who has been carrying him throughout his life.

When we face adversities, trials, and temptations, the same God that David prayed to continues to hold us In His hands. Not because we have earned it but because God cares for His people. He formed us from the dirt, walked this earth, died the death that we deserve, and rose to give us new life. This was done because of the love He has for His people, the church.

*Lord, hold us in your hands among the trials of this world.
Amen.*

Joshua Kastens (CSL Vicar)

Thursday, April 10th

“The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.” – Isaiah 50:5-6

The life of this suffering servant doesn't make sense. Isaiah describes him as having obeyed God perfectly, without rebellion and sin, and his reward is... pain and disgrace? God says of His commands in Leviticus 18:5: “If a person does them, he shall live by them.” So does Jesus, the suffering Servant, make God a liar? After all, according to God's promise He should have lived. Has God abandoned His promise of life for the one who listens and obeys His commands?

Certainly not! Jesus' perfect life of obedience did indeed earn life before God, but He gifted that life to us in our baptisms, trading our sin and death for His righteousness and life. By this one man all men have been redeemed and forgiven so that we might not face the just wrath of a holy God. The life God promises to the one who keeps the law is given to you by grace for Jesus' sake.

The suffering our Lord bore appears misplaced, but God declared it necessary for the salvation of sinners. When we see our suffering servant on the cross, taking away the sins of the world, we behold perfect, beautiful grace. By Jesus' blood, you have life as though you lived in perfect obedience, and God opens for you ears of faith to hear His gospel promises of life and love applied to you.

Holy God, You sent Your Son Jesus into our flesh to obey Your commands as we could not. Grant that we live lives of repentance and joy as we reflect on the suffering He endured in our stead; in His name. Amen.

Owen Dawson (CTSFW Sem II)

Friday, April 11th

“And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, ‘Behold, the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.’” - Exodus 24:8

This is it. The entire Exodus narrative has been leading to this climactic moment. When most people think of Exodus, they think of the first 14 chapters. God calls Moses to let His people go. With terrifying signs and wonders, God reveals Himself to His people Israel and sets them free from bondage. And of course, one cannot forget the miraculous crossing through the Red Sea!

But this. This is the heart of Exodus. This is the reason God calls Israel in the first place. Exodus 20-24 tells us of the covenant ceremony between God and Israel. God gives His Word to His people. His people are sealed with blood. The people pledge their faithfulness to Yahweh (24:3). Then, Moses and company eat and drink with Yahweh on His holy mountain! Can’t that be the end of the story?

Yet, throughout Israel’s history, we see these hopes dashed. From the golden calf to the last pages of Malachi and beyond, we see a people who transgress this covenant and throw God’s precious Word out the window. How shallow their faithfulness looks in hindsight. How shallow our faithfulness looks, too. Yet, to focus on our failings is to diminish Yahweh’s faithfulness.

We look to the one who promises a new covenant, where the end result looks eternally different: “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). The entire Scriptural narrative has been leading to this climactic moment: the blood of Jesus shed to seal His covenant people. Praise the LORD!

Heavenly Father, thank You for remaining faithful to Your people by sending Jesus, whose blood seals us. Amen.

Joshua Teggatz (CSL Sem IV)

Saturday, April 12th

“For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God’s house we walked in the throng.” – Psalm 55:12-14

Our fallen flesh tends to direct our ire and anger not toward our own sin but toward the sin of our neighbor. It is easy to stand at the foot of the cross, turn to your neighbor, and say, “It’s your sin that put Him there.” It is infinitely harder to stand there and say, “It is my sin, my own grievous sin, that nailed Jesus to the cross. It is my sin that rests upon His shoulder and it is my iniquity that led to His death.” The reality is that you are the friend who betrayed Him. You are the companion who taunted Him. However, this reality is not entirely bad news; it is not all Law. For while it is true that in your sin you are the enemy of God, it is also true that the Son of God died precisely for you. Yes, He died for the sins of the world but included in that grouping is your own betrayal, your own taunting, your own shortcomings, and your own personal sin. Jesus did not die despite your sin but for it. He went to the cross knowing full well the multitude and severity of your sins, your utter betrayal and abandonment, and still, He willingly suffered and died for you.

Lord, surely we have fallen short of Your glory and deserve nothing but punishment and death. However, through the death of Your Son on the cross you have redeemed us, turning us from enemies into children. Bless us, we pray, as we move toward Good Friday and Easter Morning; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Michael Speckhard (CTSFW Sem IV)

Palm Sunday, April 13th

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” – Zechariah 9:9

“Behold, your king is coming to you.” Wave the palm branches! Shout aloud the praises for the king. He has come to deliver His people.

Behold, your king is humble and riding a donkey? This does not seem like the proper attitude for a king. A king should be on a noble steed. In Zechariah, horses portray power and authority. A donkey is not the appropriate transportation for a noble king.

Jesus has flipped what we consider proper upside down. The one equal with the Creator humbled Himself by taking on flesh. Jesus “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7). He left His throne where the angels sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3). Jesus rides a lowly donkey among crowds who misunderstood His mission, thinking He will deliver them from the Romans: “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matthew 21:9).

Jesus stooped to wash His disciples’ feet. He became “obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Php. 2:8). The king is crowned with thorns and placed on a throne used for execution. The crowds scream “Crucify him!” (Mark 15:13).

Jesus’ ride on a donkey and triumphant entry into Jerusalem flip our world upside down. The last are first and the first are last. The strong are weak and the weak are strong. His humiliation is your exaltation.

Jesus Christ, You humbled Yourself to take our flesh, ride a donkey, and suffer death upon the cross. Grant that through Your humiliation we may be exalted to life everlasting. Amen.

Noah Oloff (CSL Sem II)

Monday of Holy Week, April 14th

“But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me they devised schemes, saying, ‘Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.’” - Jeremiah 11:19

In this verse, Jeremiah reflects on the responses he receives from God’s people as he prophesies to them. Just before, God has “decreed disaster” against His people for making offerings to Baal. Jeremiah calls himself a gentle lamb who is led to the slaughter and is wanted by all to not be remembered. His words were not well-received by those who heard him. They plotted to destroy him and to cut him off from the land of the living.

Sounds familiar, right? Jesus, too, received this treatment during His ministry. By this point during Holy Week, the chief priests and elders in Jerusalem plotted “to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill Him” (Matthew 26:4). All of these things which Jeremiah said of himself could be said about Jesus as well. One difference can be pointed out, though.

Jeremiah writes that he did not know that he was being led into a trap; but Jesus, being true God, knew exactly what was happening to Him during His trial and crucifixion. He told His disciples often that He was going to die to save all of humanity from eternal death, and after three days rise again. As this Lenten season continues, be comforted knowing that Jesus knew what was happening when going to the cross and rising again to save us from eternal death. His love is greater than any scheme plotted against Him.

Almighty God, Your Son came to our sin-filled world to save us from eternal death. Grant us Your forgiveness even though we are a part of the schemes plotted against Him because of our sin; in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Caleb Zeckzer (CTSFW Sem I)

Tuesday of Holy Week, April 15th

“You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.” - Psalm 88:18

I encourage you to read Psalm 88 in its entirety and meditate on it. Let its words sit with you; give them a chance to disturb you. It’s a troubling experience. Psalm 88 is visceral and heartbreaking, terrible in its bleakness. So far distant is light and hope that you sink into the pit of death and darkness at the Psalmist’s side as if it were your own.

We are now equidistant from the Triumphant Entry and the Last Supper, standing in the “eye of the storm,” so to speak. Yet Jesus knows what will transpire at the end of the week. Before, He had set His face to go to Jerusalem, to the open grave He knew to be waiting for Him, and His gaze has not shifted. Terrors even more frightful than Psalm 88 are soon to be His reality. His disciples will abandon him. Jerusalem, Jerusalem—the Golden City!—will revile Him. God Himself will forsake Him, and the darkness of death will be His only companion. Yet He does not falter. It is through Christ—and Christ alone—that the Psalmist’s desperate cries can be answered with an emphatic “yes.” Through Christ, God’s wonders are known in the darkness. Through Christ, God works wonders for the dead, and the departed rise up and sing his praises.

Your beloved Lord who has conquered the pit calls you friend, and He will never abandon you, in this life or the next.

Lord of life and Bringer of light, illumine the darkness of our hearts and call us into the holy fellowship of Your love and neighborly love for one another. Amen.

Hayden Brown (CSL 2nd Year PhD Student)

Wednesday of Holy Week, April 16th

“All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. They say, ‘A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies.’ Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” – Psalm 41:7-9

Have you suffered much in life? Suffering can be subjective; there is no “pain scale,” that we can use to measure exactly how much one person suffers in comparison with another. Many people who claim to have suffered much in their lives look like they’re deceiving themselves to another. Only one person meets the criteria for having suffered the most, Jesus Christ.

Jesus suffered by having God’s wrath of judgment poured out on Him at the cross. He suffered being forsaken by everyone He loved. Even one of Jesus’ own disciples, Judas Iscariot, who ate bread with Jesus at the table, lifted his heel against Jesus. All together have hated Christ and whispered about Him, “He saved others, but He cannot save Himself!” But thanks be to God that the wrath of our deadly sin and God’s righteous judgment was poured out on Christ. Jesus did not stay dead, but He rose again after three days and destroyed death and the devil for good. Thanks be to God that Jesus took our suffering and sin upon Himself and with His precious blood purchased a creation who had hated Him.

Dear God, heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus Christ into the world to have the wrath of Your righteous judgment and our deadly sin poured out on Him. Even though everyone hated Your anointed one and put Him to death on the cross, He rose again after three days and vindicated a creation which hated Him to death. Keep us ever mindful of this passion, that we may faithfully follow Christ in His sufferings and share with Him in the resurrection on the Last Day. Amen.

Samuel Ledford (CTSFW Sem II)

Maundy Thursday, April 17th

“On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.” – Isaiah 25:6-8

On this Maundy Thursday our season of Lent is about to come to an end. In these weeks of preparation, we have journeyed through the prophecies of the Old Testament that come to fruition in the Paschal Triduum. Our passage paints the picture of things that have come to pass but also of things that are still to come. The now, and the not yet.

Christ has come. Death is swallowed up. The reproach of His people has been taken away. This is done for all nations, all people, once and for all. But perhaps there is even more to be said about the not yet. Isaiah prophesies of a feast on Mount Zion, the place where the LORD dwells with His people. He tells of a time when the LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces. These themes are picked up by our Lord when He speaks of the kingdom of heaven and the feast that is to come. St. John hears this proclamation from heaven in Revelation 21: “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain.”

We look back to the work of Christ on the cross, that all things have been accomplished through Him. We look forward, with Isaiah and St. John, to the return of Jesus Christ and to the things still yet to come.

Lord Jesus Christ, thank You for this Lenten season, for this time of reflection and self-denial. Thank You for Your incarnation, for Your death on the cross for our salvation. Be with us until Your return, keep us in the faith until You come again. Amen.

Karl Jacobson (CSL Sem I)

Good Friday, April 18th

“Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” – Isaiah 53:10–11

It was the will of God, His eternal and unchangeable will, which He ordained before creation and the foundation of the world, to be in relationship with us. But we turned away. There is only one way back: the way of righteousness. But it is impossible for us to walk. So it was necessary that God Himself become man, the incarnate Word of God, to deliver us. It was necessary for the will of God to prosper that the Christ be crushed and put to grief. Christ offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice to remove our guilt and shame.

On the cross, Christ’s suffering and death brings about the prolonged days of eternal life, in order that Jesus Christ might be the firstborn of many offspring (Rm. 8:29). Through the cross we are accounted righteous, justified and reconciled to God. To those that believe in His name, Jesus Christ has given the right to become children of God, born not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but by the will of the Lord our God (Jn. 1:12-13).

What wondrous love is this that cause the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul! (LSB 543:1)

Almighty and everlasting God, who willed that Your Son should bear for us the pains of the cross that You might reconcile us to Yourself– help up us to keep our Lord’s passion before our eyes, to see its necessity and by it obtain the remission of sins and redemption unto eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Lyle D. Doster (CTSFW Sem III)

Holy Saturday, April 19th

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish... ‘I went down to the land whose bars closed around me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit; O LORD my God.’” – Jonah 2:2,6

Holy Saturday. What do we do now? No doubt a question posed by the disciples. In this text, Jonah seems to have reached the same point. What shall I do now? I feel totally cut off from God.

Christ shared in that feeling just yesterday, upon the cross. “Eli, eli, lema sabachthani?” Christ is connected to us in this feeling. He is our high priest, one familiar with this flesh’s shortcomings and blindness. He sacrifices His true freedom as the Son of God to endure what sin brings. As He promised, the sign of Jonah will be the only one given; Jonah, in this text, is surrounded by the deep and by seaweed. Christ takes this upon Himself and defeats death, the devil, and any supposed power they claim. Christ’s victory is made obvious this day, yet we cannot help feeling He is distant. His victory will be declared, but for the moment, the only option we have is to thank and praise, to serve and obey our Lord and Savior who delivers us from such dire places, even a sea creature’s belly; indeed, even death itself.

Lord God, we thank You for our deliverance, gifted to us by Your Son and communicated to us through the Sacraments. Keep our trust in You even when our vision fails us. Amen.

Christopher Genszler (CSL Sem I)

The Resurrection of Our Lord, April 20th

"For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." – Psalm 16:10-11

The grave is what you have earned. Death is the rightful wage of sin, and no one is exempt. Every grave preaches the same Law: "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Left to yourself, you would be abandoned to Sheol, consigned to the corruption that sin has wrought upon your flesh and soul. The Law speaks plainly—there is no escape!

But death is not the end. Though the grave swallows all flesh, it could not hold the One who is the Life itself. David's words, spoken centuries before Christ, proclaim a promise: death will not have the final say. This is no mere wishful thinking but the certainty of divine prophecy. The Holy One would not see corruption.

Jesus entered the darkness of death, bearing the weight of sin—your sin—yet He did not remain there. The Father raised Him, fulfilling the words of this Psalm and proving that His sacrifice was sufficient. His resurrection is not just His victory—it is yours. The grave that once threatened to hold you forever is now nothing more than a temporary resting place. In Christ, the path of life is made known. The joy of His presence is no longer a distant hope but a present reality for all baptized into Him.

So today, rejoice! The One foretold in the Psalms has conquered. The path of life is open. The grave is powerless. The curse of death has been undone, and in the presence of the Risen Christ, there is joy without end.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, You have triumphed over death and opened the path of life. Keep us steadfast in this joy, that we may dwell in Your presence forever. Amen!

Marius-Sergiu Trifa (CTSFW Sem II)

