



2026 LENTEN DEVOTIONS

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SCAN FOR DIGITAL/AUDIO
VERSION THROUGH HOPE APP:



**HOPE
LUTHERAN**
Church & School

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17
Psalm 46 ✚ Introduction

God Is Our Fortress *To the choirmaster.
Of the Sons of Korah. According to Alamo. A Song.*

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- ² Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
- ³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*

From today through Holy Week, the book of Psalms will be used as our basis for daily devotions during the season of Lent. The Psalms are beautiful poetry that address various issues in life we face – some joyous and some sorrowful – and other emotions, situations or needs between the two.

We pray this use of the Psalms gives you time to reflect and find The Psalms useful for enhanced prayer life. Today's psalm is the one Martin Luther used as his inspiration to write the hymn, "A Mighty Fortress." God's Word is where we go to find both sanctuary (refuge) and strength, as we pray daily for God's Spirit to deliver us peace and strength to face each day gladly, joyfully, and with a right spirit.

Psalm 46 finishes with a great passage:

- ¹⁰ "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among
the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"
- ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

Our prayer is that these devotions point us to God, His will in our lives, His direction, His purpose and His peace.

We pray: Father, deliver Your peace which surpasses all understanding to keep our hearts and minds on Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7) Provide quiet and stillness to hear Your Word and call upon You daily. Amen.

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Psalm 39:5-8 † Hope

- ⁵ Behold, You have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing before You.
Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! *Selah*
- ⁶ Surely a man goes about as a shadow!
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth
and does not know who will gather!
- ⁷ "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.
- ⁸ Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool!"

In today's Psalm, David is acknowledging how brief this life is and the need to be delivered from his transgressions. It is noted in the Lutheran Study Bible that Augustine wrote: "In no other way can you be perfect in this life, than by knowing you cannot be perfect in this life." David would be the first to admit he is not perfect.

The psalm assigned for today, Ash Wednesday, is Psalm 51, written by David after his eyes were opened to his grievous sins surrounding his affair with Bathsheba.

Ash Wednesday begins a penitential season that encourages us to reflect on our own actions and thoughts, stemming from our hearts and minds. Using a psalm of repentance makes sense as we begin our journey through Lent.

As we move through the season of Lent, always remember: God is a God of abundance, not of want. In Him and His forgiveness of sin do we find hope.

We pray: Gracious Father, forgive me when I am not aligned with You in heart and mind. Forgive me for my sin. Help me to hear Your Word. Help to find the hope of everlasting life through Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Psalm 77:1-3 † Suffering

- ¹ I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and He will hear me.
- ² In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted.
- ³ When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints.

Today's psalm was written by Asaph, a musician and choirmaster of God's temple. We suffer in this life. We seek God when we suffer, and as Asaph writes, we cry aloud. He is truly a suffering servant, his soul refusing help and growing weary to the point of his spirit 'fainting.'

Suffering is part of this life. To whom do we turn when we suffer?

Isaiah 40 uses similar language but gives us this promise too:

- "²⁸** Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable. **²⁹** He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. **³⁰** Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; **³¹** but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

The Lutheran Study Bible notes assure us that even the "strong believers and spiritual leaders among God's people may find themselves troubled by times of weakness in their faith." God, however, sends His Spirit to strengthen us, to give us hope, to renew us. His steadfast love, His covenant with us, is found in Jesus Christ. Christ's own suffering, death and resurrection give us hope as we suffer in this life and strength to overcome these times.

We pray: Heavenly Father, help me in moments or times of suffering. Strengthen me by sending Your Spirit to hear Your Word and take it to heart. Heal me, strengthen me, help me to hear Your words of hope through the sacrificial, covenant love of Your Son and servant Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20
Psalm 4:1-3 ✚ Conflict

- ¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!
- ² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will You love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*
- ³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for Himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him."

David has seen a considerable amount of conflict in his life. Some of the conflict comes at the hands of others and some from his own hands. Throughout his life, scripture shows us how David turns to God for peace.

Our conflict may be internal or external, but in all we experience, we should offer ourselves to our heavenly Father and ask Him for relief. Jesus reminds us of the importance of God's presence when we call upon Him, saying, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

We pray: Heavenly Father, as I experience conflict in my life, help me to better understand Your will and to find ways to seek peace, be it my own doing or the work of others. Hear my prayer gracious God, heavenly Father, and focus my eyes on the cross of Christ. In Him do I have eternal peace. Help me to understand this and help me to bring this conflict to an end peacefully. Amen.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21
Psalm 73:26-28 ✚ Strength

- ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
- ²⁷ For behold, those who are far from You shall perish;
You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to You.
- ²⁸ But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
that I may tell of all Your works."

Where do you find strength?
To whom do you turn when you need that extra push in life?

Let me know because I often turn to the wrong things like myself (who got me here to begin with), or some store-bought item that says it can help in my need for strength, be it a book or a vitamin or some promising wonder drug to help me build muscle, lose weight, pay attention, calm down, listen, hear, see ... well, you get the idea.

There is nothing wrong with those, but true strength comes from God. Asaph acknowledges this truth in today's psalm. Our portion forever comes through faith in Christ. In Him we do not perish. In Christ we find refuge and strength. This strength given to us by faith is what we share with those who do not know Him.

We pray: God, our fortress and strength, in You we seek refuge through Your Son Jesus Christ. Through this faith, we gain strength in our hearts and eternal life. Give us the strength to share this good news with others as we know the joy this faith brings us. Amen.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22
Worship & Sunday School

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23
Psalm 118:14-16, 22-24 ✚ Peace

- 14** The LORD is my strength and my song;
He has become my salvation.
- 15** Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous:
"The right hand of the LORD does valiantly,
16 the right hand of the LORD exalts,
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!
- 22** The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
- 23** This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.
- 24** This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

When I read this psalm, I always wish I had the capacity to know it and that I could recite it from memory. It's that good.

It is packed with God's goodness and steadfast love, the promise of our deliverance. Peter will cite it. Luther will declare it his favorite. "I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore, I call it my own" (The Lutheran Study Bible).

Our salvation is Christ, the stone whom the builders rejected. Our faith in Him is what we rejoice each day. The LORD, when capitalized like that, is the God of the covenant. It is also known as "steadfast love." The covenant to provide us with a Savior, Christ the Lord. The LORD made this day. Let us rejoice and be glad in the steadfast love of God.

We pray: Gracious God, we give thanks to You for this day. In Christ, do we have salvation. In Him, do we have refuge. In Him, do we find peace. Amen.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24
Psalm 62:5-8 ✚ Guidance

- 5** For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from Him.
- 6** He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
- 7** On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.
- 8** Trust in Him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us."

David, king of Israel, is speaking a truth in his psalm. No time is given when David wrote it, but given the wisdom surrounding this psalm, it probably came later in life.

We often see age as that which defines wisdom (those who are older). Given I no longer have hair and what hair I have is silver, I expect knocks at my door or calls/texts daily asking for help, advice and wisdom. I rarely get those calls or visits which is probably best. All I can offer is my own mistakes, poor choices and experiences which can cause the listener to glaze over in seconds and doze within minutes.

God is our source of wisdom, as David notes. We wait in silence to learn from His Word, spoken or read. This Word is where our guidance in life springs forth. In His Word do we find wisdom, refuge and strength.

We pray: Gracious all-knowing God, give me the patience to call on You and to wait on You and Your Word. In Christ's name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Psalm 51:3-12 ✝ Forgiveness & Mercy

This is one of David's more well-known psalms. He wrote it after his affair with Bathsheba, his ordered killing of her husband Uriah, a great warrior who fought for Israel, and the death of the son born from that affair (2 Samuel 11). Nathan goes to David to confront him about this sin, and David finally relents and repents (2 Samuel 12). David and Bathsheba, once restored, bear a son named Solomon.

To that end, what do we do in our own lives that we feel God will not forgive? Knowing He forgave David for a multitude of sins, including the fact that he forgot who God was in his own life, how does this story and this psalm give you and me hope in our own lives? Pray that the answer to that question is clear, "With God, all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

The psalm serves as the bible reading and prayer for us today.

We pray: *Heavenly Father, 3 ... I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Amen

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Psalm 95:1-3 ✝ Worship & Praise

- 1** Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
- 2** Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!
- 3** For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

The psalmist today is inviting us to worship God gladly and to make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! The phrase is repeated twice in the first two verses, so it is an intentional redundancy.

In short, when we come to worship God, do we do so gladly, with joyful hearts, or do we do so out of obligation, being dragged in tow by the hand like a mother with her unruly child? Do we open our hearts to God's Word and hear it read, discussed and lifted in song or do we consume our minds with our cellular devices and to-do lists? What is obsessing us outside of worship?

Today, give thanks to God for His desire to call on us, and our response to sing praises to Him.

We pray: *Gracious God, quiet my mind. Help me to be still in Your presence. Give me the posture of a glad and joyful heart as I worship You in formal worship or come to You in prayer or personal devotion. Open my heart to hear Your Word and give it meaning to me as I go through my day. Praise to You, O Lord, for the salvation You have given to me through faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Psalm 119:33-34 ✝ Purpose & Direction

- 33** Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes;
and I will keep it to the end.
- 34** Give me understanding, that I may keep Your law
and observe it with my whole heart.

The writer of Psalm 119 gives us a clear path to our own purpose and direction in life: meditation on God's Word. In the psalm, the writer takes us through the Hebrew alphabet and uses each section to break down God's Word by asking for God to teach him, and us, His Word. Today, He seeks to be taught and to understand.

If I know God's law, am I enlightened? Maybe, because unlike the laws of this land, God's law comes with His Spirit who seeks to open our hearts and minds to reveal the sin that lurks within us and the need to come to faith in Christ Jesus. The law of God reveals to me sin and iniquity that dwells in me. The gospel shines light on Christ and the mercy and forgiveness our faith in Him brings us by reconciling us with God.

God's Spirit reveals the need for a Savior through His law. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5: "1 God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." My direction and purpose are found in learning God's Word. His law and gospel both point me to Christ. I pray God's Spirit enlighten me as to this purpose.

We pray: Gracious Father, teach me Your ways and Your truth. Help me to find my purpose in life and give me direction in life through Your Word. Open my heart to hear Your Word and use it to give me knowledge and understanding. Help me to share the joy of knowing You through Your Word for the purpose of bringing others to You. Amen.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Psalm 3 ✝ Worry & Anxiety

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

- 1** O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me;
2 many are saying of my soul,
"There is no salvation for him in God." *Selah*
- 3** But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
- 4** I cried aloud to the LORD,
and He answered me from His holy hill. *Selah*
- 5** I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.
- 6** I will not be afraid of many thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.
- 7** Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For You strike all my enemies
on the cheek; You break the teeth of the wicked.
- 8** Salvation belongs to the LORD;
Your blessing be on Your people!

We've already talked about David's forgiveness and restoration in God's eyes, but that didn't mean his actions with Bathsheba didn't have earthly consequences. He becomes consumed with worry and fear about an uprising caused by family dysfunction and leading ultimately to a challenge from his son Absalom (2 Samuel 15-17).

What grips you with worry or causes anxiety? Where do you go to deal with these? David points us to "salvation in God."

Christ, God's salvation, tells us to cast our worries on Him in Matthew 11: "28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

We pray: Gracious and Merciful God, I thank You for forgiving my sin. Help me to overcome my own fear and the alienation my sin has caused by casting these burdens on You as well. I know in my heart these worries are temporary and fleeting, but I know Your Word is eternal. Forgive me when I forget this and attempt to resolve it on my own, without You. In Christ's name, Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1
Worship & Sunday School

MONDAY, MARCH 2
Psalm 33:20-22 ✚ Love

²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.

²¹ For our heart is glad in Him, because we trust in His holy name.

²² Let Your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in You"

Some may say that the word 'love' is a cheapened word that means little or nothing in our culture. We use it to describe our feelings for an athlete or a team: "I love Texas Tech." We use it to describe clothing, food, and anything that needs an emphasis on how much we appreciate, like, or use an item. "I love this pocketknife because it has any number of functions, many of which I don't use."

God's love and use of the word love are described by the writer of Psalm 33 as a father or mother love his or her children. Our heavenly Father looks down from heaven and sees His children and all His creation (v 13), which shapes a picture of God watching over us. He fashions our hearts (v 15) and perfects a plan of salvation (v 18). Those who fear Him and hope in His steadfast love delivers us from death and keeps us alive in famine (v 19). This includes our spiritual famine where we find ourselves before our baptism. Water and Word unite us with Him through faith in His Son.

God's love for us cannot be cheapened. He gave His Son for us so that we may have everlasting life with Him. "Greater love has no one than this, that He lay down His life for His friends." (John 15:13)
"Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39)

We pray: Gracious God, I give thanks for Your steadfast love which gives us faith through our baptism into Christ. Through Your mercy, grace, and love, I am redeemed. Thank You for the blessing of Your love and the strength the bond of this love has. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 3
Psalm 119:105 ✚ God's Will

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

What does God want me to do in this situation? Where should we go to dinner? What schools should my kids attend? Do I take this job or do I stay where I am? We seek God's will in our lives during situations like this, but are we asking the right question?

The psalmist in 119 asks for God to give understanding, knowledge, teaching, instruction, to walk, deal bountifully with, open my eyes to His instruction, and a host of other actions. These are to better know God's Word. God's Word is a lamp for the feet and a light to my path.

God's Word instructs us on His will, to know Him and His plan of salvation in our lives. To know this is to know God's will. This helps us to "grow where we are planted," commonly referred to as our vocation, our calling in life (or the sum of who we are as God's children serving as sons and daughters, and called to be brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, friends, employees, co-workers, and neighbors). Our calling is to share God's Word which has illuminated our path, so out of joy we share it with others.

We pray: Gracious God, help me to see the path You have given me in life so that I may walk in Your way. Help me to understand Your Word and to share it in all situations I find myself in, my true calling. In Christ's name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4
Psalm 72:12-14, 18-20 ✝ Suffering

- 12** For He delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.
13 He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
14 From oppression and violence He redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in His sight.
18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
19 Blessed be His glorious name forever; may the whole earth
be filled with His glory! Amen and Amen!
20 The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.*

In today's psalm, King Solomon writes of the attributes of God that deliver us from our own suffering here on earth. God essentially does many great and mighty things. He is our deliverer (Israel recognizes this language as they were delivered from Egypt out of slavery). He has pity on the weak and needy and saves the lives of those in need.

Solomon finishes with a doxology (v18–20) for our redeemer (v14) who has delivered us from suffering to the promise of eternal life. A common hymn we sing is a song of praise for our creator and redeemer called "The Doxology."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him, all creatures here below.
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

We pray: *Merciful Father, hear my prayer when I suffer. Help me to know my prayer will be answered in Your time. Help me to accept Your answer as Christ did in the garden when He said, "Your will, not mine." In all, Your grace is sufficient for me. In Christ, Amen.*

**The note at the end of the psalm is explained in the Lutheran Study Bible notes. At one time, the Book of Psalms may have ended here. David is usually attributed as the "main writer of Psalms." Psalm 72 is now the ending psalm of "Book Two." The Psalms is a book divided into "Five Books:" 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, 107–150.*

THURSDAY, MARCH 5
Psalm 103:1-8 ✝ Forgiveness & Mercy

- 1** Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me,
bless His holy name!
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits,
3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
5 who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the people of Israel.
8 The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

This psalm is the first in a line of psalms (103 – 106) in which David praises the Lord. It brings an end to the 4th book of Psalms in a way that reminds us of all the blessings which God has bestowed on us, starting first and foremost with His plan for our forgiveness for the sin in our lives. "He forgives all our iniquity, heals us, redeems us and gives us eternity through His steadfast love found through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. He delivered Israel and us through works of righteousness and justice."

Isaiah 42 echoes this gentle nature of God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love:

- 3** a bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick He will not quench; He will faithfully bring forth justice.
4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for His law."

We pray: *God, You are gracious and filled with mercy; forgive me of my sin. You have blessed me in many ways, but praise be to You for Your redeeming mercy found through faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Bless my soul, O Lord, for Your steadfast love. Amen.*

FRIDAY, MARCH 6
Psalm 131:1-3 † Hope

I Have Calmed and Quieted My Soul

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

- ¹ O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.
- ² But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.
- ³ O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.

Psalms 120 – 134 are called “Songs of Ascents.” Jerusalem was on a hill, and the temple was located at the highest point in the city. For those making a pilgrimage to the city, these psalms were read along the way (or sung or recited), and for those in the city, the psalms were read as they drew near for worship. This psalm is David’s psalm as he prepares for entry into God’s presence. His mind is quieted as is his soul. His hope is with God. As king of Israel, he prays Israel’s hope is as well.

Where do we place our hope? A familiar hymn echoes this sentiment:

**My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.**

May this be our prayer for today, and always. Amen.

“My Hope is Built” Edward Mote, 1836, London. (Lutheran Service Book #576)

SATURDAY, MARCH 7
Psalm 98:1-5 † Worship & Praise

- ¹ Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him.
- ² The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.
- ³ He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
- ⁴ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!
- ⁵ Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody!

If we are singing a new song, what was the old song? The “old song” the psalmist is referring to is the Song of Moses (Exodus 15).

The new song? Revelation 5 says: ⁸ And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

The new song is Jesus Christ, the lamb who was slain and whose blood was ransomed. He reigns in heaven and on earth.

We pray: Gracious Father, Help me to sing and worship You with joy and reverence. Help me remember this new song as I worship You daily and in worship with others. In Christ’s name, Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 8
Worship & Sunday School

MONDAY, MARCH 9
Psalm 1 ✝ Strength

- ¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
- ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.
- ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- ⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

The first psalm lays out the tone for the rest of the book. God's Word is our source for our "daily bread," our sustenance, our strength. Pastor Eric has noted the progression of sin as it grows in our lives – from active (walking) to passive (sitting). Sin grows through counsel, along the way, or with scoffers (v 1).

Our delight is in none of those. Earthly ways perish. Our delight comes from God's Word (v 2). A believer is like a tree planted by a stream where water and nourishment are plentiful (v 3). Rely on God's Word for sustenance. God's Word is our "living water" in whom we have "eternal life" (John 4).

We pray: Heavenly Father, we come to You for strength. From the waters of our baptism, Your Spirit gives us strength and sustenance daily through Your Word. Give me the strength necessary to do Your will. In Christ's name, Amen

TUESDAY, MARCH 10
Psalm 27:1-5 ✝ Worry

The LORD Is My Light and My Salvation *Of David.*

- ¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- ² When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.
- ³ Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.
- ⁴ One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple.
- ⁵ For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble; He will conceal me under the cover of His tent; He will lift me high upon a rock.

Why are we using Psalms solely as our source for devotions? To remind us that when our words fall short or when we cannot think of what to say, God has said it through servants like David and others in his book of poetry known as The Psalms.

When we worry, fear, experience anger, delight, joy, problems, and a host of other afflictions in life, look at a psalm and lift it as a prayer.

We pray: Dear Heavenly Father, help me when I worry or am anxious. Your grace is sufficient. You have given me salvation through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Return me to You in repentance. Restore me through Your Holy Spirit. Give me shelter from the storms I face and give shelter to those I love who face them with me. These things I ask in your Son's name. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11
Psalm 73:23-26 † Peace

- ²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with You;
You hold my right hand.
²⁴ You guide me with Your counsel,
and afterward You will receive me to glory.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

What can disturb our peace more than anything else? For today's psalmist, it is envy. We can catch ourselves thinking, "My sacrificial living is fine but look at the unbeliever and all they have. That's not fair or right."

God answers us in this psalm with words that remind us that being in Him and seeking His voice from His Word are more than enough. As I've gotten older, I have learned that I have everything I could ever need or want. What's sad is I've also learned I've known that but not lived it.

Paul's words from Philippians 4 resonate with me:

"¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

We pray: Father, help me to be content in life. In and through Your Son, we find peace. In Christ, we can do all things. Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12
Psalm 32:1-2 † Grace

Blessed Are the Forgiven; *A Maskil of David.*

- ¹ Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
⁴ For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*
⁵ I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

A *maskil* is a penitential psalm of confession and absolution. David does an excellent job of framing the impact of sin in a figurative sense, "... when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning ..."

In his letter to the church, the apostle John writes, "⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9).

Thanks be to God for hearing our confession and forgiving our sins.

We pray: Heavenly Father, You know my comings and goings. I cannot hide from You. You know what is on my heart. I cannot lie to you. Forgive me when I fail to confess the truth of my sin in my life. My actions and lack of action are known by You. Forgive me, and create a clean heart in me, O God. In Christ's name, Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13
Psalm 63:1-8 ✚ Guidance

My Soul Thirsts for You;

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

- 1 O God, You are my God; earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh faints for You, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- 2 So I have looked upon You in the sanctuary, beholding Your power and glory.
- 3 Because Your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You.
- 4 So I will bless You as long as I live; in Your name I will lift up my hands.
- 5 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise You with joyful lips,
- 6 when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the watches of the night;
- 7 for You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I will sing for joy.
- 8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.

Theologian Eugene Peterson studies David's time in the wilderness, escaping Saul's tormented wrath. The sharpening of David, with constant guidance from God, is clear as he evades Saul in this life-altering experience. David loves Saul, his king, father-in-law, and would-be killer. Saul is tormented by the loss of God's favor and Spirit due to his unfaithfulness in not following God's will and centers this anger on David.

We see to whom David turns in the wilderness, noted in the Hebrew as a place that is absent of God (Pastor Eric's teachings). When Christ enters the wilderness after His baptism to be tempted by Satan, He drew from God's Word. David turned to God.

Where do you and I turn when in the wilderness in our own lives? That is Peterson's question. Pray as David prayed for guidance.

We pray: Gracious Father, I too find times when I truly thirst for Your Word. Send Your Spirit to provide me with the wisdom and discernment necessary to get me through these wilderness moments. I pray these things in Jesus name, Amen.

"Leap Over a Wall." Eugene Peterson. HarperOne, 1998

SATURDAY, MARCH 14
Psalm 127:1-2 ✚ Conflict

Unless the LORD Builds the House

A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.

- 1 Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.
- 2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for He gives to His beloved sleep.

A man journeys to the temple in Jerusalem, using these "Songs of Ascents" along the way. Where is he at this point?

Solomon, the builder of the temple, tells us that as we approach God's presence, remember who built the temple. Not man. God's hand is present in our daily lives. With His Hand, He builds His church; Christ's church. When we have conflict among ourselves, may we remember to whom we belong. Listen to the words of Solomon's prayer after the temple was built, furnished, and the Ark of the Covenant brought into the temple:

"O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart; 24 You have kept with Your servant David my father what You declared to him. You spoke with Your mouth, and with Your hand have fulfilled it this day" (1 Kings 8:23-24).

Let us echo the words of Solomon today as we pray: *Gracious God, God of all people, we put our faith and trust in You alone. We dwell in Your Word, which dwells among us. We are Your church; Christ is our groom. May we walk in Your ways and proclaim Your message daily. Amen.*

SUNDAY, MARCH 15
Worship & Sunday School

MONDAY, MARCH 16
Psalm 121:1-2 ✝ God's Will

My Help Comes from the LORD; *A Song of Ascents.*

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Along the journey to Jerusalem, it may be possible to feel overwhelmed. A pilgrimage takes time and trouble may find us along the way. The psalmist today expresses need for help. Where does his help come from as he looks up toward Jerusalem? God.

Where do we look when we seek God's will in our lives? Down. Down in reverence when we pray and down to read His Word. Like the psalmist, we seek God in our daily walk through His Word.

We pray: Gracious God, to whom shall we turn? You have the words of eternal life. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17
Psalm 31:1-2 ✝ Strength

Into Your Hand I Commit My Spirit
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

¹ In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!

² Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily!

Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!

Today we celebrate St. Patrick's Day. There will be wearin' o' the green. There will be songs, festivities, and a viewin' o' John Wayne's best movie ever, "The Quiet Man." 'Tis a day indeed.

St. Patrick is a saint in the church for a reason though, and this devotion was planned in advance without any idea it would fall on St. Patrick's Day. Consider these facts on Patrick:

- At 16, he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and taken as a slave.
- After 6 years, he escaped captivity and returned to Britain
- He became a Bishop and returned to Ireland to convert the Irish to Christianity
- Patrick arrived in Ireland in 432 AD and began his ministry, establishing many churches and converting many

In Romans 1, Paul writes: "Paul, a servant (slave) of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."

Give time today to think about St. Paul and St. Patrick. Note God gave them the strength to overcome and to grow through circumstances beyond imagination for us, to which they both dedicated their lives to God to return and share God's mercy on those who put them through trials and torment.

We pray: God, give me the strength to overcome and to thrive. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18
Psalm 5:1-3, 7-8 ✝ Hope

Lead Me in Your Righteousness

To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.

- 1** Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning.
- 2** Give attention to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God, for to You do I pray.
- 3** O LORD, in the morning You hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for You and watch.

Have you ever felt hopeless? You are not alone. David, God's chosen servant, a man after God's own heart, king of Israel, and a man who had it all, felt completely hopeless at times. How could that be? David, like the rest of us, feels isolated or separate from God. This separation is caused by our sinful nature that alienates us from God. When David feels this way, he seeks healing of that alienation.

- 7** But I, through the abundance of Your steadfast love,
will enter Your house. I will bow down toward Your holy
temple in the fear of You.
- 8** Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my
enemies; make Your way straight before me.

The steadfast love of God, His covenant love with Israel, heals the alienation. His Son, Jesus Christ, is the steadfast love for us. The Lutheran Study Bible confirms this: "God's unwavering devotion to the salvation of His people finds its fulfillment in the cross of Christ."

Paul speaks of this love in 1 Corinthians 13: **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. **13** So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

"Mirror dimly" means we will not fully understand the full love of God on earth, but we will know it when we are with Christ. God's greatest gift to us is His love, found through Christ.

We pray: Gracious God, help me connect to You when I feel hopeless. Help me to know Your love is present and given to me freely. Help me to understand this unconditional, steadfast love You have for me. Help me to share this love with others. In Christ's name, Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19
Psalm 139 ✝ Purpose & Direction

Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

- 1** O LORD, You have searched me and known me!
- 2** You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You discern my thoughts from afar.
- 3** You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 4** Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
- 5** You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay Your hand upon me.
- 6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it."

I have some psalms that are clearly my favorites. Psalms 46, 51, 118, and 139 rank up there for me. Today, we read Psalm 139 and seek God's purpose and direction in our lives. It speaks of God's intimacy with us even before we were conceived. God has plans for us (Jeremiah 29:11).

As we grow closer to Holy Week take a moment to reflect: what am I learning from this time in devotion and God's Word that can give me direction?

Read Psalm 139 in its entirety and make that your prayer.

Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Psalm 30:1-3, 11-12 ✝ Grace & Mercy

Joy Comes with the Morning

A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.

- ¹ I will extol You, O LORD, for You have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
- ² O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You have healed me.
- ³ O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You restored
me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
- ¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have
loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,
- ¹² that my glory may sing Your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever!

King David is joyous. His joy is at the dedication of the temple, the one put up during his time. Solomon will build the more permanent structure and dedicate it later. Yet David is joyous because the temple means God's presence is assured, and His presence is promising because of the grace He gives.

Jesus assures us of this joy as well. Nearing the end of His ministry, Jesus engages His disciples in deep conversations.

¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?" ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:19-20).

Our sorrows turn into joy knowing the grace we have and will see one day when we are with Jesus. His grace gives us joy as we live in His presence.

We pray: Gracious God, You have turned our mourning into dancing, our sorrows into joy. Your mercy and grace abound so we may live! Help us share this joy with others and turn their sorrow into joy through Your Spirit. Amen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

Psalm 134:1-3 ✝ Worship & Praise

Come, Bless the LORD; *A Song of Ascents.*

- ¹ Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD,
who stand by night in the house of the LORD!
- ² Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD!
- ³ May the LORD bless you from Zion,
He who made heaven and earth!

This is the last psalm in the Songs of Ascents (120–134). We journey to church. We arrive. We enter. Finally, we worship and receive God's gifts as He serves us.

May our worship be filled with joy and thanksgiving.

We pray: Heavenly Father, when I come to worship You, I pray my posture is one of humility, but my praise is joyous and heartfelt. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 22
Worship & Sunday School

MONDAY, MARCH 23
Psalm 28:1-3, 6-7 † Worry/Anxiety

The LORD Is My Strength and My Shield; *Of David.*

- 1** To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if You be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.
- 2** Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to You for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.
- 3** Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts.
- 6** Blessed be the LORD! For He has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.
- 7** The LORD is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to Him.

I saw a video featuring Eugene Peterson, theologian and author, and Bono, man of faith and lead singer of the band U2. In it, Peterson told Bono his love of The Psalms, and Bono concurred. Peterson noted the book is like a manual on how to talk to God in all kinds of settings. Angry with God? Go to Psalms. Hurt by life? Go to Psalms. Frustrated? Go to Psalms. Joyous or happy? Go to Psalms.

In the Psalms, David almost demands that God listens, and God passed the passage along as the ultimate author of scripture. "Do not be deaf to me!" is a clear imperative, or order from David to God. The Lutheran Study Bible notes that this psalm may be, again, David's cry for help when Absalom, his son, rebelled against him. David's needs are urgent.

Yet, the same notes say that David's prayer contains words of praise in anticipation of God's answer. David knows God hears and answers him, in due time. For that, and that alone, David is thankful.

We pray: God, You know what troubles me. Hear me when I turn to You, for You and Your Word have the words of eternal life. Help me to quiet my soul and know You will answer me. In Christ's name. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24
Psalm 100:1-5 † Praise

- 1** Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!
- 2** Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into His presence with singing!
- 3** Know that the LORD, He is God!
It is He who made us, and we are His;
we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.
- 4** Enter His gates with thanksgiving,
and His courts with praise!
Give thanks to Him; bless His name!
- 5** For the LORD is good;
His steadfast love endures forever,
and His faithfulness to all generations.

The psalmist today gives us language to lift and praise God! We experience heart-felt joy at times in our lives, and we respond to the source and giver of all good things.

We pray: Heavenly Father, thank You for all You have done for me in my life. I am truly thankful for the blessings You have provided—both what I have requested and what You know I need. In Christ's name. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25
Psalm 25:1-7 ✝ Forgiveness

- 1** To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, in You I trust; let me not be put to shame;
let not my enemies exult over me.
3 Indeed, none who wait for You shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
4 Make me to know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths.
5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of
my salvation; for You I wait all the day long.
6 Remember Your mercy, O LORD, and Your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
7 Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to Your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of Your goodness, O LORD!

The God of our salvation, the LORD of the Covenant, has delivered us from the sins of our "youth" (I say as a 66-year-old man still throwing myself at God's feet seeking forgiveness daily). The Lutheran Study Bible notes that this song may have been sung at the start of worship, which reflects the very "Order of Worship" we have today.

We enter worship seeking forgiveness, and the pastor speaks the words of absolution upon hearing our confession. We have been in a season of penitence, reflecting on the need of a Savior who is soon to be sentenced, beaten, sent to His death, and who will rise from the dead. This act enables us to walk with Him in faith. God is the God of our salvation! His steadfast love, since having "been from of old," removes our sin and transgressions.

We pray: Grace-filled God, I give thanks for the mercy and forgiveness You have given me through Your Son Jesus Christ. In His name I pray, Amen.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26
Psalm 29:10-11 ✝ Peace

- 10** The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as King forever.
11 May the LORD give strength to His people!
May the LORD bless His people with peace!

The LORD of the covenant (all capital letters) sits over judgment – the flood. David knew his history. He grew up a shepherd, so the story tells us the importance of learning God's Word in his early life because he became king at a young age, anointed as an adolescent by Samuel. David knew the people who heard this psalm would be familiar with the story of the flood too.

God sent His Son for us to be reconciled. Through this reconciliation, God fulfilled His covenant with Israel and with us. Simeon, an elderly man, recognized the Christ in Luke 2, and he lifted up this song to God:

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26** And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. **27** And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, **28** he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, **29** "Lord, now You are letting your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; **30** for my eyes have seen Your salvation **31** that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, **32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel."

David foretells of the Messiah as do the prophets. Simeon, inspired by God's Spirit, sees Christ and knows who He is. The God of Judgment is also the God of Peace and Reconciliation.

We pray: Gracious and merciful Father, help me to hear the message of reconciliation as we draw near Easter, the day Your Son defeated death, sin, and Satan for us. Help me to know the peace this gives. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 27
Psalm 67:1-5 ✚ God's Blessing

- ¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make His face to shine upon us, *Selah*
- ² that Your way may be known on earth,
Your saving power among all nations.
- ³ Let the peoples praise You, O God;
let all the peoples praise You!
- ⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for You judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
- ⁵ Let the peoples praise You, O God;
let all the peoples praise You!

The psalmist today asks God to “make His face shine on us.” This takes the hearer back to the story of the Israelite exodus and Numbers 6:25–27, where Aaron gives God's blessing to Israel. The Lutheran Study Bible reflects on God's face, which meant death to those who see it and death when God turned His face toward His enemies.

Now, we learn of God's face in a “different light.” The Study Bible continues, “God's face beams with gentle kindness so that His people are not harmed but blessed. Through the mercies and promises of the covenant, the people who were terrified by the Lord's presence now begin to see Him for who He is.” (Notes on Numbers 6)

We pray: *Gracious God, You give me refuge, strength and salvation. You have blessed me by making Your face shine on me through the reconciliation of the covenant love shone by Your Son. His face will be marred by blood, scourged by thorns, and paled by death, but He will rise again. Shine Your face on me as I go through Holy Week and open my heart to hear of the sacrificial gift of Your Son's suffering, death and resurrection. Amen.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 28
Psalm 51 ✚ Preparation

As we ponder Holy Week and prepare for it, we again turn to this psalm of David to focus our hearts and minds on God's reconciliation for us through sacrificial love as His face “shines on us.”

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love;
according to Your abundant mercy blot out my
transgressions.
- ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
- ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in
Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and
blameless in Your judgment.
- ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- ⁶ Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being,
and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- ⁹ Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Cast me not away from Your presence,
and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my
salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Your
righteousness.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise.