

Readings for March 2019

Sunday 3rd March 2019

Exodus 34:29-35

Moses came down from Mount Sinai, carrying the Ten Commandments. His face was shining brightly because the LORD had been speaking to him. But Moses did not know at first that his face was shining. When Aaron and the others looked at Moses, they saw that his face was shining, and they were afraid to go near him. Moses called out for Aaron and the leaders to come to him, and he spoke with them. Then the rest of the people of Israel gathered around Moses, and he gave them the laws that the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

The face of Moses kept shining, and after he had spoken with the people, he covered his face with a veil. Moses would always remove the veil when he went into the sacred tent to speak with the LORD. And when he came out, he would tell the people everything the LORD had told him to say. They could see that his face was still shining. So after he had spoken with them, he would put the veil back on and leave it on until the next time he went to speak with the LORD.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18, 4:1-2

This wonderful hope makes us feel like speaking freely. We are not like Moses. His face was shining, but he covered it to keep the people of Israel from seeing the brightness fade away. The people were stubborn, and something still keeps them from seeing the truth when the Law is read. Only Christ can take away the covering that keeps them from seeing.

When the Law of Moses is read, they have their minds covered over with a covering that is removed only for those who turn to the Lord. The Lord

and the Spirit are one and the same, and the Lord's Spirit sets us free. So our faces are not covered. They show the bright glory of the Lord, as the Lord's Spirit makes us more and more like our glorious Lord.

God has been kind enough to trust us with this work. That's why we never give up. We don't do shameful things that must be kept secret. And we don't try to fool anyone or twist God's message around. God is our witness that we speak only the truth, so others will be sure that we can be trusted.

Luke 9:28-36

About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James with him and went up on a mountain to pray. While he was praying, his face changed, and his clothes became shining white. Suddenly Moses and Elijah were there speaking with him. They appeared in heavenly glory and talked about all that Jesus' death in Jerusalem would mean.

Peter and the other two disciples had been sound asleep. All at once they woke up and saw how glorious Jesus was. They also saw the two men who were with him.

Moses and Elijah were about to leave, when Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here! Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But Peter did not know what he was talking about.

While Peter was still speaking, a shadow from a cloud passed over them, and they were frightened as the cloud covered them. From the cloud a voice spoke, "This is my chosen Son. Listen to what he says!"

After the voice had spoken, Peter, John, and James saw only Jesus. For some time they kept quiet and did not say anything about what they had seen.

Ash Wednesday 6th March 2019

Joel 2:1-2,12-19

Sound the trumpet on Zion,
the LORD's sacred hill.

Warn everyone to tremble!

The judgment day of the LORD
is coming soon.

It will be dark and gloomy
with storm clouds overhead.

Troops will cover the mountains
like thunderclouds.

No army this powerful
has ever been gathered before
or will ever be again.

The LORD said:

It isn't too late.

You can still return to me
with all your heart.

Start crying and mourning!
Go without eating.

Don't rip your clothes
to show your sorrow.

Instead, turn back to me
with broken hearts.

I am merciful, kind, and caring.

I don't easily lose my temper,
and I don't like to punish.

I am the LORD your God.

Perhaps I will change my mind
and treat you with mercy.

Then you will be blessed
with enough grain and wine
for offering sacrifices to me.

Sound the trumpet on Zion!
Call the people together.
Show your sorrow
by going without food.
Make sure that everyone
is fit to worship me.
Bring adults, children, babies,
and even bring newlyweds
from their festivities.
Tell my servants, the priests,
to cry inside the temple
and to offer this prayer
near the altar:
"Save your people, LORD God!
Don't let foreign nations
make jokes about us.
Don't let them laugh and ask,
'Where is your God?'"
The LORD was deeply concerned
about his land
and had pity on his people.
In answer to their prayers
he said,
"I will give you enough grain,
wine, and olive oil
to satisfy your needs.
No longer will I let you
be insulted by the nations.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21, 6:1-10

We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God.

We work together with God, and we beg you to make good use of God's kindness to you. In the Scriptures God says,

"When the time came,
I listened to you,
and when you needed help,
I came to save you."

That time has come. This is the day for you to be saved.

We don't want anyone to find fault with our work, and so we try hard not to cause problems. But in everything and in every way we show that we truly are God's servants. We have always been patient, though we have had a lot of trouble, suffering, and hard times. We have been beaten, put in jail, and hurt in riots. We have worked hard and have gone without sleep or food. But we have kept ourselves pure and have been understanding, patient, and kind. The Holy Spirit has been with us, and our love has been real. We have spoken the truth, and God's power has worked in us. In all our struggles we have said and done only what is right.

Whether we were honoured or dishonoured or praised or cursed, we always told the truth about ourselves. But some people said we did not. We are unknown to others, but well known to you. We seem to be dying, and yet we are still alive. We have been punished, but never killed, and we are always happy, even in times of suffering. Although we are poor, we have made many people rich. And though we own nothing, everything is ours.

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from your Father in heaven.

When you give to the poor, don't blow a loud horn. That's what show-offs do in the meeting places and on the street corners, because they are always looking for praise. I can assure you that they already have their reward.

When you give to the poor, don't let anyone know about it. Then your gift will be given in secret. Your Father knows what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

When you pray, don't be like those show-offs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners. They do this just to look good. I can assure you that they already have their reward.

When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you.

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When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you.

When you go without eating, don't try to look gloomy as those show-offs do when they go without eating. I can assure you that they already have their reward. Instead, comb your hair and wash your face. Then others won't know that you are going without eating. But your Father sees what is done in private, and he will reward you.

Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

Sunday 10th March 1st Sunday of Lent

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Moses said to Israel:

The LORD is giving you the land, and soon you will conquer it, settle down, and plant crops. And when you begin harvesting each of your crops, the very first things you pick must be put in a basket. Take them to the place where the LORD your God chooses to be worshiped, and tell the priest, "Long ago the LORD our God promised our ancestors that he would give us this land. And today, I thank him for keeping his promise and giving me a share of the land."

The priest will take the basket and set it in front of the LORD's altar. Then, standing there in front of the place of worship, you must pray:

My ancestor was homeless,
an Aramean who went to live
in Egypt.

There were only a few
in his family then,
but they became great
and powerful,
a nation of many people.

The Egyptians were cruel
and had no pity on us.
They mistreated our people
and forced us into slavery.

We called out for help
to you,
the LORD God
of our ancestors.

You heard our cries;
you knew we were in trouble
and abused.

Then you terrified the Egyptians
with your mighty miracles

and rescued us from Egypt.
You brought us here
and gave us this land
rich with milk and honey.
Now, LORD, I bring to you
the best of the crops
that you have given me.

After you say these things, place the basket in front of the LORD's altar
and bow down to worship him.

Then you and your family must celebrate by eating a meal at the place of
worship to thank the LORD your God for giving you such a good harvest.
And remember to invite the Levites and the foreigners who live in your
town.

Romans 10:8-13

All who are acceptable because of their faith simply say, "The message is
as near as your mouth or your heart." And this is the same message we
preach about faith. So you will be saved, if you honestly say, "Jesus is
Lord," and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from
death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell
it to others.

The Scriptures say that no one who has faith will be disappointed, no
matter if that person is a Jew or a Gentile. There is only one Lord, and he
is generous to everyone who asks for his help. All who call out to the Lord
will be saved.

Luke 4:1-13

When Jesus returned from the Jordan River, the power of the Holy Spirit was with him, and the Spirit led him into the desert. For forty days Jesus was tested by the devil, and during that time he went without eating. When it was all over, he was hungry.

The devil said to Jesus, "If you are God's Son, tell this stone to turn into bread."

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say, 'No one can live only on food.'"

Then the devil led Jesus up to a high place and quickly showed him all the nations on earth. The devil said, "I will give all this power and glory to you. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. Just worship me, and you can have it all."

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say:

'Worship the Lord your God
and serve only him!'"

Finally, the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem and had him stand on top of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say:

'God will tell his angels
to take care of you.
They will catch you
in their arms,
and you will not hurt
your feet on the stones.'"

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God!'"

After the devil had finished testing Jesus in every way possible, he left him for a while.

Sunday 17th March 2nd of Lent

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Later the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision, "Abram, don't be afraid! I will protect you and reward you greatly."

But Abram answered, "LORD All-Powerful, you have given me everything I could ask for, except children. And when I die, Eliezer of Damascus will get all I own. You have not given me any children, and this servant of mine will inherit everything."

The LORD replied, "No, he won't! You will have a son of your own, and everything you have will be his." Then the LORD took Abram outside and said, "Look at the sky and see if you can count the stars. That's how many descendants you will have." Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD was pleased with him.

The LORD said to Abram, "I brought you here from Ur in Chaldea, and I gave you this land."

Abram asked, "LORD God, how can I know the land will be mine?"

Then the LORD told him, "Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a dove, and a young pigeon."

Abram obeyed the LORD. Then he cut the animals in half and laid the two halves of each animal opposite each other on the ground. But he did not cut the doves and pigeons in half. And when birds came down to eat the animals, Abram chased them away.

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and everything became dark and frightening.

Sometime after sunset, when it was very dark, a smoking cooking pot and a flaming fire went between the two halves of each animal. At that time the LORD made an agreement with Abram and told him:

I will give your descendants the land east of the Shihor River on the border of Egypt as far as the Euphrates River.

Philippians 3:17-21 4:1

My friends, I want you to follow my example and learn from others who closely follow the example we set for you. I often warned you that many people are living as enemies of the cross of Christ. And now with tears in my eyes, I warn you again that they are headed for hell! They worship their stomachs and brag about the disgusting things they do. All they can think about are the things of this world.

But we are citizens of heaven and are eagerly waiting for our Saviour to come from there. Our Lord Jesus Christ has power over everything, and he will make these poor bodies of ours like his own glorious body.

Dear friends, I love you and long to see you. Please keep on being faithful to the Lord. You are my pride and joy.

Luke 13:21-35

It is like what happens when a woman mixes yeast into three batches of flour. Finally, all the dough rises.”

As Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he taught the people in the towns and villages. Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”

Jesus answered:

Do all you can to go in by the narrow door! A lot of people will try to get in, but will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and locks the door, you will be left standing outside. You will knock on the door and say, “Sir, open the door for us!”

But the owner will answer, “I don’t know a thing about you!”

Then you will start saying, “We dined with you, and you taught in our streets.”

But he will say, “I really don’t know who you are! Get away from me, you evil people!”

Then when you have been thrown outside, you will weep and grit your teeth because you will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in God's kingdom. People will come from all directions and sit down to feast in God's kingdom. There the ones who are now least important will be the most important, and those who are now most important will be least important.

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "You had better get away from here! Herod wants to kill you."

Jesus said to them:

Go tell that fox, "I am going to force out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and three days later I'll be through." But I am going on my way today and tomorrow and the next day. After all, Jerusalem is the place where prophets are killed.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Your people have killed the prophets and have stoned the messengers who were sent to you. I have often wanted to gather your people, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you wouldn't let me. Now your temple will be deserted. You won't see me again until the time when you say,

"Blessed is the one who comes
in the name of the Lord."

Sunday 24th 2019 3rd of Len

Isaiah 55:1-9

If you are thirsty,
come and drink water!
If you don't have any money,

come, eat what you want!
Drink wine and milk
without paying a cent.
Why waste your money
on what really isn't food?
Why work hard for something
that doesn't satisfy?
Listen carefully to me,
and you will enjoy
the very best foods.

Pay close attention!
Come to me and live.
I will promise you
the eternal love and loyalty
that I promised David.
I made him the leader and ruler
of the nations;
he was my witness to them.
You will call out to nations
you have never known.
And they have never known you,
but they will come running
because I am the LORD,
the holy God of Israel,
and I have honored you.

Turn to the LORD!
He can still be found.
Call out to God! He is near.
Give up your crooked ways
and your evil thoughts.
Return to the LORD our God.
He will be merciful
and forgive your sins.

The LORD says:
"My thoughts and my ways
are not like yours.
Just as the heavens

are higher than the earth,
my thoughts and my ways
are higher than yours.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Friends, I want to remind you that all of our ancestors walked under the cloud and went through the sea. This was like being baptized and becoming followers of Moses. All of them also ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, which flowed from the spiritual rock that followed them. That rock was Christ. But most of them did not please God. So they died, and their bodies were scattered all over the desert.

What happened to them is a warning to keep us from wanting to do the same evil things. They worshiped idols, just as the Scriptures say, "The people sat down to eat and drink. Then they got up to dance around." So don't worship idols. Some of those people did shameful things, and in a single day about twenty-three thousand of them died. Don't do shameful things as they did. And don't try to test Christ, as some of them did and were later bitten by poisonous snakes. Don't even grumble, as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as a warning to us. All this was written in the Scriptures to teach us who live in these last days.

Even if you think you can stand up to temptation, be careful not to fall. You are tempted in the same way that everyone else is tempted. But God can be trusted not to let you be tempted too much, and he will show you how to escape from your temptations.

Luke 15:1-9

Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this story:

If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep."

Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to."

Jesus told the people another story:

What will a woman do if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them? Won't she light a lamp, sweep the floor, and look carefully until she finds it? Then she will call in her friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found the coin I lost."

Sunday 31st March 2019 4th of Lent

Joshua 5:9-12

The LORD told Joshua, "It was a disgrace for my people to be slaves in Egypt, but now I have taken away that disgrace." So the Israelites named the place Gilgal, and it still has that name.

Israel continued to camp at Gilgal in the desert near Jericho, and on the fourteenth day of the same month, they celebrated Passover.

The next day, God stopped sending the Israelites manna to eat each morning, and they started eating food grown in the land of Canaan. They ate roasted grain and thin bread made of the barley they had gathered from nearby fields.

2 Corinthians 5:15-21

And Christ did die for all of us. He died so we would no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died and was raised to life for us.

We are careful not to judge people by what they seem to be, though we once judged Christ in that way. Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others.

What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace. We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God.

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this story:

Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.

Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."

But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate.

The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."