

F O R T Y D A Y

L E N T E N D E V O T I O N A L



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FROM YOUR PASTOR

"For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return"

Gen 3:19

Ash Wednesday is a Christian holiday (literally holy day) that believers have been celebrating for over a thousand years. It's a day when we admit that we are frail, we are failing, and we will return to the dust that we came from. But that is not the final word for us. It is a day that, yes, reminds us that we are full of imperfections, but even more, it reminds us of our need for the perfect One: Jesus Christ.

It's a day where we mourn like Job over sin, mortality, and death in "dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). But we are also able to rejoice as we echo the Apostle Paul's words, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55-56). This is beautiful news that destroys the horrific news of sin, guilt, and death, because Christ was destroyed for us.

Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent are all about preparation and repentance. Lent is the period of forty-days (not counting Sundays) stretching from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Historically, Christians have set aside this time to prepare their hearts to remember Jesus' death and celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Easter is not only the day in human history where death lost its sting, it's also the defining reality of the Christian life. This devotional is a guide for preparing our hearts for Easter. It's a journey that finds us walking in newness of life, because death was swallowed up in victory when Jesus walked out of the tomb Easter morning.

My prayer for the Lenten season and this devotional guide is that Christ, who speaks the final word over death, will remind you of how much you need him, how much those around the world need him, and how much he calls you to participate in his global mission. Therefore, each Friday during Lent we are calling the church to not only pray, but also fast. The risen Savior of the world is in sight, let's prepare ourselves for him.

I want to thank Sojourn Community Church for preparing this devotional and allow Renaissance Church to use this devotional during the Lenten Season.

Enjoy Grace,

Rob

BRIEF FASTING GUIDE

During these forty days of Lent leading up to Easter (skipping Sundays), we are asking Renaissance men and women to **fast on Fridays for missions**. Fasting is a lost art in modern evangelical Christianity, but it's a important discipline Christ prescribes for us (Matthew 6:1-6, 6:16-18, 9:14-15). *Biblical fasting has four goals generally:*¹

1

The focus of fasting should not be on the absence of food. We swap the time we would commit to food preparation, eating, and cleaning for time of concentrated prayer, not on missing the food.

3

Fasting fosters concentration on God and his will. Fasting creates a heightened sense of spiritual awareness as we subtract from the noise of our lives and go to God for a specific purpose.

2

Fasting provides a real-life illustration of dependency. Our dependency on food exposes our greater dependency on God. It can also be humbling as we discover how dependent we may be on food for our emotional well-being.

4

Fasting offers a way to impose self-control in your life. Working on self-discipline physically builds fortitude for self-discipline spiritually.

Beginning with the first Friday after Ash Wednesday (2.20) and continuing each Friday during Lent, we are asking Renaissance men and women to fast, to literally hunger, for the nations. You can participate however your body allows, for instance: pregnant women and diabetics may need to substitute unplugging the television for 24 hours or some other fast instead of food. There are three basic ways to fast:

1. 36-Hour Food Fast where after eating dinner on Thursday night, the faster doesn't eat again until breakfast Saturday morning.
2. 24- Hour Food Fast where after dinner on Thursday night, the faster skips breakfast and lunch but then eats dinner an hour later than normal on Friday. Thus fasting for a full 24 hours.
3. Fasting from certain items (TV, social media, etc.) or from solid food (smoothies-fruit juice instead), or skipping meal.

However, if you choose to fast remember to be safe by drinking water, not overexerting with exercise on fast days, and also tell a friend about your fast. As we examine ourselves during the Lenten season, let's also fast and pray for the gospel to reach the ends of the earth.

¹ *This section was put together using Richard Wagner's Christianity for Dummies & Donald S. Whitney's Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life.*

DAY 1 **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

READ PSALM 90

*Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
You turn people back to dust,
saying, "Return to dust, you mortals,"*
Psalm 90:2-3

Before the world existed, God was God, and God was God without us. The psalmist confesses our total dependence as mere dirt waiting for the command to come to life or to pass away. We are well-served to recognize our desperate situation. We must own our ashes. If we do, we can cry out with great expectation of God's life-giving compassion.

Prayer

Father, before the mountains were born or you brought forth the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. I confess and remember that you are greater than me, because you were before me. As I journey through Lent teach me to number my days. Give me a heart of wisdom. Give me a heart that knows its need and trusts your supply. Amen.

DAY 2 **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

READ GENESIS 1:1, 26-28

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule,"
Genesis 1:1,26

Genesis 1:1 has been called the most pregnant verse in all the Bible. Simply put, everything began with God. And so it was all really good. It was the kind of good that should have filled up the whole world. It was Adam and Eve's job to fill it up. And it's ours.

Prayer

Father, I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your eyes saw my unformed body, and all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Thank you for creating so well, and for sharing with me the task to fill your earth with good. Lord, may your earth be filled with the good knowledge of your glory, as waters cover the sea. Amen.

DAY 3 FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

READ GENESIS 3:1-13

The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:7-8

Even though Adam and Eve walked with God and had every good thing, they chose evil. They disregarded God and his good command, which is sin. Many scoff over this story as mythical, but these are God's trustworthy words, and the proof is in us. We, too, disregard God's commands. From the womb, we are infected with the same poisonous blood which flowed in Adam and Eve. The world is broken. And it's our fault.

Fasting & Prayer

Each Friday throughout Lent we are calling the church to fasting and prayer. See the fasting guide in the front of the devotional for helpful details. Begin this day by meditating on the story from Genesis 3. The scriptures tell us that "in Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Allow yourself to feel the tragedy of your separation from God. Use each hunger pang through out the day to long for restoration. End your fast with a meal and rejoice in the hope of a coming Savior.

DAY 4 SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

READ GENESIS 3:14-24

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel

Genesis 3:15

This passage is full of sobriety and hope. The skin coverings foretell of a coming sacrificial Lamb. The flaming sword that guards the tree of life shows that God doesn't want Adam and Eve in their crippled state forever. And finally, God's death sentence for serpent speaks of a coming Son of Man who would crush his lying skull.

Prayer

Father, you do not take lightly the sins that I commit because you are a God of holiness who loves justice. You never allow evil to go unpunished. But I thank you for your wisdom and mercy in devising a plan to save me. You chose your Son to take my death sentence. Amen.

DAY 5 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

READ GENESIS 6:5-8

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

Genesis 6:5-6

It's tough to take in the emotions expressed by God here. But we need to feel them. It doesn't mean God was any less in control or changing his character. It just means he has a heart. He aches over the things worth aching over. In such darkness only one person sparkled in God's eye. This Noah foreshadows the only One who alone would please the Father.

Prayer

Father, there is no one good, not a single one. I'm becoming more and more aware of the inclinations and thoughts of my heart. But you said about Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So because of him I pray, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling; naked, come to Thee for dress; helpless, look to Thee for grace; foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die!" Amen.

DAY 6 TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

READ GENESIS 11:1-9

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule,"

Genesis 11:9

The hope of a new start through Noah and his family is quickly extinguished as humanity fills the earth again. At Babel, mankind gathers and builds a tower to prove that they don't need God. The confusion of their languages is a harsh judgment—but one that is according to a gracious plan. It fills the world with unique languages, tribes, nations, and peoples. Keep this in mind as the story continues to unfold.

Prayer

Father, there is a way that seems right to us, but it always ends in death. I confess your ways are not my ways, and your thoughts are not my thoughts. In every way I fail you, you are able to turn it for my good. And this is true not only for me, but for all people throughout the world. I am humbled and hopeful because your anger lasts only a moment, but your favor lasts a lifetime. Amen.

DAY 7 **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25**

READ JOSHUA 24:2-3, GENESIS 12:1-3

*I will make your name great...
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you,*
Genesis 12:2-3

When God chose Abraham, he was being an average pagan worshipping false gods. Purely by grace did God choose Abraham to be a blessing to all peoples through his offspring. Are we any different? Did we catch God's attention in some special way? Absolutely not! But can God now use us to bless those around us? Yes, from my neighborhood all the way to the nations.

Prayer

Father, you are so different from me. Your works are so great they are almost unbelievable. Just like you graciously called Abraham, you've called me to yourself. Abraham believed you, and it was counted to him as righteousness. I believe you too, Lord. You can take a normal worshiper of false gods, and change me so that I, too, can be a blessing to the world. Amen.

DAY 8 **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26**

READ JUDGES 21:25

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit,
Judges 21:25

Sometimes the antics of God's people are almost embarrassing to read. The trouble wasn't so much that they didn't have a great king. God was their king, but they would not have him. Showing themselves not so far removed from the Garden of Eden, they still wanted to do what seemed right to themselves. This is the storyline of the world. This is the story of our lives.

Prayer

Father, I often fail to trust in you with all my heart. Instead I lean on my own understanding. I fail to submit my ways to you, when you would be delighted to clear a path before me. I have been wise in my own eyes and missed out on the healing and nourishment of your kingship. I recognize this isn't just the way of the world, it's also my way of doing things. My King, pour out your mercy on me today. Amen.

DAY 9 **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27**

READ 2 CHRONICLES 7:13-16

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land,
2 Chronicles 7:14

It's easy for us to point our fingers when it comes to state of the world. But God calls people to own their part in the mess. He is eager to restore forsaken lands and peoples, but he chooses to work through his people. When his people are proud and prayer-less, their sin goes unforgiven and situations are left in despair. And we wonder why.

Fasting & Prayer

Each Friday throughout Lent we are calling the church to fasting and prayer. See the fasting guide in the front of the devotional for helpful details. Begin the day by meditating on God's promise from 2 Chronicles 7:14. Turn on the news during a fasted meal time and reflect on your part in the world's brokenness. Resist the urge to shift blame. When you end the fast with a meal, rejoice in the God who promises to hear, forgive, and heal.

DAY 10 **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28**

READ JOSHUA 2:9-11

When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below,
Joshua 2:11

Rahab and her people had heard of God's glory and his destruction of Egypt. Rahab, a non-Jewish prostitute, feared God and chose to follow him. Even during the time of Joshua, the nations around Israel knew of the might and power of God. God was making his name known to the nations even when his own people struggled to be faithful to him.

Prayer

Father, you reveal yourself even to those who do not ask for you. You are found by those who do not seek you. All day long you hold out your hands to obstinate people who walk in their own ways, pursuing their own crooked schemes. Thank you for purchasing us with the life of your Son. As one among those faraway nations, like Rahab, I thank you for revealing yourself to me. You are God in heaven above and on the earth below. Amen.

DAY 11 **MONDAY, MARCH 2**

READ 1 KINGS 4:29-34, ECCLESIASTES 1:13-17

I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

Ecclesiastes 1:14-15

The beginning of Solomon's reign in Israel appeared to be what the world had been waiting for. He was trending as the wisest man around. Yet by the end of his rule, he had nearly gained the world only to forfeit his soul. "My people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge," God would later say in Hosea 4:6. Not a lack of information, but a lack of transformation. They didn't know the God who could straighten what was crooked.

Prayer

Father, fearing you is the beginning of true knowledge. Yet too often I see information, not transformation, as the solution. Lord, I remind myself that your wisdom was fully on display in your Son, Jesus. Though he is foolishness to the world, he is wisdom to me. Just as the nations marveled at the wisdom of Solomon, I pray the nations would wonder at the wisdom and power of Christ crucified. Amen.

DAY 12 **TUESDAY, MARCH 3**

READ 2 CHRONICLES 6:32-33

Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name,

2 Chronicles 6:33

In this passage, King Solomon offers a prayer of dedication over the temple (6:12-42), the epicenter of God's glory on the earth at that time. Within his prayer Solomon asks God to grant the prayers of the foreigner so that "all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you." It may seem like a strange aside in the flow of the prayer, but it reflects God's ongoing concern beyond Israel's kingdom.

Prayer

Father, may we live for your kingdom and invite everyone to life with God under your rule and reign. Too often, we live for our own pitiful kingdoms and ignore the foreigner. Lord, receive and perfect this little prayer like Solomon's. May I live for your unshakeable kingdom today and be happy to welcome others into it. Amen.

DAY 13 **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4**

READ PSALM 2

*Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth
your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery,*

Psalm 2:8-9

This psalm casts a broader light on God's plan for the nations. Though he is a refuge for all people, the nations for the most part rage against him. So God has set up his Son as King and will soon bring judgment to those who don't pay homage to him alone. God's heart for the world doesn't come as flimsy invitation. It's a warning for the day he will rule with a rod of iron and end the nations' raging by dashing them to pieces in his just judgment.

Prayer

Father, those who do not believe in you stand condemned already. There is only one name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. I, too, once raged against you in my ignorance. But you have graciously opened my eyes, turned me from dark to light, and from the power of Satan to God. I thank you and I cry out for your mercy on behalf those who continue to rage against you. Amen.

DAY 14 **THURSDAY, MARCH 5**

READ PSALM 67

*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—so that
your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations,*

Psalm 67:1-2

When we encounter God in his glorious love, it leads to a certain kind of response. This has always been God's design for his people: filling them with himself so that the whole world knows who he is. The missionary God is not one who makes people go live in Africa as penance for partying too hard in college. Instead, God lavishes us with grace until we say, "May the peoples praise you, O God, may all the peoples praise you!"

Prayer

Father, be gracious to me and bless me. Make your face shine upon me, so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all peoples. May all the peoples praise you! May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. Amen.

DAY 15 **FRIDAY, MARCH 6**

READ PSALM 78:32-39

*In spite of all this, they kept on sinning;
in spite of his wonders, they did not believe,*
Psalm 78:32

Over and over God's people rebelled against him, were judged severely, and came crawling back. God's gracious discipline was never enough to keep them from wandering. They needed someone to take the full measure of God's wrath for them. But before we look to Christ, which is so easy to do on this side of the cross, put yourself in their shoes. This cycle of death was all the world knew.

Fasting & Prayer

Each Friday throughout Lent we are calling the church to fasting and prayer. See the fasting guide in the front of the devotional for helpful details. Begin the day by imagining yourself in the shoes of someone before the coming of Christ. During a fasted meal take a walk and pray for the people you see, many of whom are also trapped in a cycle of death. End the fast with a meal and have a spirit of rejoicing in the God who saves from both sin and its power.

DAY 16 **SATURDAY, MARCH 7**

READ PSALM 106:35-46

*They mingled with the nations and adopted their customs.
They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to false gods*
Psalm 106:35,37

Rather than being a bright beacon of God's glory among the nations, Israel joined in their paganism. Today, because Jesus was obedient even to death, God has already given him the nations as an inheritance and possession. In that authority Jesus commands us to go and make disciples of all nations. Yet we are often filled with insecurities and hesitations when it comes to crossing cultures, even in our own neighborhoods.

Prayer

Father, the earth is yours and everything in it. Forgive me for being apathetic toward people who are different from me. Encourage me today with the confidence of Christ ruling over the whole world and sending me to claim what already belongs to him. Fill my mouth and open their hearts that the King of glory may come in. Amen.

DAY 17 **MONDAY, MARCH 9**

READ ISAIAH 49:1-6

It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth,
Isaiah 49:6

Here Isaiah prophesies of a coming Servant, referring to Jesus. God is speaking through his prophet to very clearly describe Israel's coming Messiah as one who will complete the mission of God to Israel and the ends of the earth. This is good news for us! For we are those Gentiles in darkness. We are part of the ends of the earth.

Prayer

Father, I see the world through the lens of my own culture. It's easy for our "Christian" culture to forget we were once not among your chosen people. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, like dry, fruitless branches. Yet by your grace you grafted us into the people of God. Thank you! Remind me today of the amazing mystery now revealed even to the ends of the earth: Christ in us, the hope of glory. Amen.

DAY 18 **TUESDAY, MARCH 10**

READ ISAIAH 52:13-53:12

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,
Isaiah 53:6

The journey of the world to this point in the story has been one of constant suffering and sorrow. There's only one person who would show the world even deeper suffering and sorrow, identifying with them in every way. The world would not understand a crucified Christ as they clamored for sword-wielding heroes. And today's world of religious extremism, political jockeying, and economic scheming still doesn't understand him.

Prayer

Father, thank you for sending your Son as a suffering servant. Thank you that he took up my pain and bore my sorrow, was pierced for my transgressions and crushed for my iniquities. Thank you that he will justify many and sprinkle many nations. I pray for those today who put their hope in sword-wielding heroes. May their disappointment in such men prepare their hearts for the glory of the One who gave himself for us. Amen.

DAY 19 **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11**

READ ISAIAH 61:10-11

For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations

Isaiah 61:11

Rarely a moment goes by when God does not in some way express his heart for all nations. When discussing global missions, many people turn immediately to the New Testament and the Great Commission. But we actually learn just as much about God's mission from the Old Testament. There, his glorious, loving, pursuing character is on display. This mission is not a ministry for some to participate in. It's part of who we are as the people of God.

Prayer

Father, I delight greatly in you. My soul rejoices because you are my God. You have clothed me with garments of salvation and given me a robe of righteousness. Lord, as you do this for others among all nations, show me also how to participate in whatever way you choose. Amen.

DAY 20 **THURSDAY, MARCH 12**

READ JONAH 3:6,10-4:11

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry

Jonah 3:10,4:1

Let's be honest, Jonah's attitude is so pitiful it's almost comical. Yet when we deeply consider what's coming out of his whiny heart, the story has profound things to say to us. God's compassion always falls on those who don't deserve it. Which is good news until it's poured out upon someone we can't stand. Words can't describe how vile the Assyrians had been to everyone, including Israel. It was tortuous for Jonah to watch them receive mercy. Who is it that makes you uncomfortable at the thought of them suddenly being God's beloved?

Prayer

Father, you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. Thank you for your mercy toward those who don't deserve it. I certainly didn't deserve it and still don't. Forgive me for the limitations I want to place on your grace. Even if no one comes to mind that I would struggle to welcome into the family of God, search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is an displeasing way in me, and lead me in the way of your endless grace. Amen.

DAY 21 **FRIDAY, MARCH 13**

READ EZEKIEL 36:22-28

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you
Ezekiel 36:26-27

The prophet Ezekiel passes on harsh words from the Lord to the exiled people of Israel. His frustration is evident: they have profaned his name among the nations. But God promises to advance the mission himself and to accomplish it by putting his Spirit in his people. Even after Jesus' resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, God's people have not always been quick to join him in his mission to the world.

Fasting & Prayer

Each Friday throughout Lent we are calling the church to fasting and prayer. See the fasting guide in the front of the devotional for helpful details. Begin the day by remembering how impossible it was to please God before you were given a new heart through the Holy Spirit. During a fasted meal go to JoshuaProject.net and pray for an unreached people group. When you end the fast with a meal, rejoice in the Spirit who has been poured into your heart and is actively at work among the people you prayed for.

DAY 22 **SATURDAY, MARCH 14**

READ HABAKKUK 2:13-14,20

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea,
Habakkuk 2:14

One of the best ways to prepare ourselves for Easter is to reflect upon God's continual fulfillment of plans he set before the world even began. We are a people who squirm and fret at life's what-if's. Though we've seen the Father in the face of Jesus Christ, we still struggle each day to trust his promises. Yet he is faithful not only in the smallest of life's details, but also in the grandest of his plans. When it comes to God's plan for the whole world, we can know without a doubt that God will fill the earth with knowledge of his glory as waters cover the sea.

Prayer

Father, you sit enthroned above the circle of the earth. You stretch out the heavens like a canopy. You determine the number of the stars in the sky and call them each by name. Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket, and you have your way with them. You will cover the world with the knowledge of your glory. I sit silently before you in anticipation of it. Amen.

DAY 23 **MONDAY, MARCH 16**

READ MALACHI 1:10-14

“Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king,” says the Lord Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations,”
Malachi 1:14

God spared himself no expense in our salvation. He'll spare us no expense in our sanctification. He deserves and demands the best we have to offer that he might be glorified among the nations. But rather than offering ourselves as living sacrifices, we withhold from God. Like the people addressed in Malachi, we pick and choose what can be given to God and what cannot. Living on mission in our homes, neighborhoods, classrooms, and cubicles can often be off limits to God. For most people, serving cross-culturally is definitely off limits. “What a burden!” our hearts cry.

Prayer

Father, in view of your mercies, I desire to present myself to you as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing. I want to lay my gifts, talents, resources- even my weaknesses- before you, and ask you to use me to make your name great in my home, neighborhood, classroom, cubicle, and even among the nations. Let me not wait for a day of “total surrender.” I offer myself to you in the midst of my hesitations knowing I can always draw near with confidence to your throne of grace. Amen.

DAY 24 **TUESDAY, MARCH 17**

READ LUKE 2:22-32

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel
Luke 2:30-32

The long-awaited Savior had finally come, born of a virgin as the sinless Son of God. Even before he uttered more than a squeal, a faithful old man named Simeon who had been longing for his arrival scooped him up and declared what the prophets had been hinting at all along: this child was for the salvation of all peoples.

Prayer

Father, as someone from the ends of the earth, I thank you so much that I can say, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” He is my Wonderful Counselor, my Mighty God, my Everlasting Father, my Prince of Peace. Thank you for Immanuel, God with us. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations. Amen.

DAY 25 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

READ JOHN 4:4-42

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world,"

John 4:42

Here, Jesus, a Jewish man, smashes cultural norms to engage a Samaritan woman. As a Samaritan woman, many Jews would have considered her so filthy that they would likely have held their breathe around her in fear of being contaminated. Yet Jesus explains that he is her Messiah. By graciously receiving her and her entire village, Jesus also turns the apostles' thinking upside down. He was after peoples beyond Jerusalem and Judea. And they were often more ready to receive him than the people of Israel.

Prayer

Father, you did not send your Son to call the healthy, but the sick. Thank you that he came to seek and to save the lost, like me. Thank you for your willingness cross cultural boundaries, no matter what it cost you. Forgive me for assuming who is ready to receive you and who isn't. Help me to have a broken and contrite spirit, that I may be sensitive to those who are broken, poor, sick, and ready for a Savior. Amen.

DAY 26 THURSDAY, MARCH 19

READ LUKE 4:14-30

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff

Luke 4:28-29

Jesus opens up his public ministry with an infuriating, prophetic word. He reminds the Jewish audience of two Old Testament instances in which God's grace was extended to Gentiles rather than Jews. It was not what their itching ears wanted to hear from a young punk rabbi. The implication is the year of the Lord's favor has fallen upon the Gentiles, while the Jews will miss out with hardened hearts. This story is a warning to us to guard ourselves against hoarding God's grace. It doesn't do the heart well.

Prayer

Father, thank you for sending your Son to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, and recovery of sight for the blind. Thank you that he was filled with both grace and truth, speaking hard things that we needed to hear. Lord, continue to give me a heart of flesh that genuinely rejoices at any sign of your kingdom, and remembers the joy of making room for others. Amen.

DAY 27 **FRIDAY, MARCH 20**

READ MARK 11:15-17

*He overturned the tables of the money changers...said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'?
But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'*

Mark 11:15b,17

We are all prone to turning things to our own advantage. For us, the gathering of the people of God can easily become a talent show, marketplace, campaign trail, or barber shop. Yet God's heart is for us to turn things to others' advantage that all people might draw near to him.

Fasting & Prayer

Each Friday throughout Lent we are calling the church to fasting and prayer. See the fasting guide in the front of the devotional for helpful details. Begin the day by asking God to reveal how your tendency to use the church to your own advantage. During a fasted meal, use the time to bless others by praying for a missionary. When the fast ends with a meal, rejoice in the God who delights to give rather than receive.

DAY 28 **SATURDAY, MARCH 21**

READ JOHN 10:16, 17:20-21

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd,

John 10:16

The theme of Jesus' concern for more than just the Jews only grew in strength at the conclusion of his life and ministry. He thought of them, talked about them, and prayed for them. Jesus was thinking of us, talking about us, and praying for us on his way to the cross. It makes sense, then, if Jesus now lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, that we also would think of, talk about, and pray for those far from him.

Prayer

Father, thank you for your Son who is at your right hand even as I pray, interceding for me. Thank you that he thought of me, talked about me, and prayed for me. Yet I recognize it was not only for me, but for all of his lost sheep scattered all over the world. So I join him in those prayers. I ask that you would draw them to Christ just as you did for me, that the world may know that Christ is Lord. Amen.

DAY 29 **MONDAY, MARCH 23**

READ MATTHEW 24:4-14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come,

Matthew 24:14

Here, Jesus lays out some significant guarantees in his global mission: the nations will rage, the church will suffer, and the gospel will advance. Some have made this passage into a formula, saying that as soon as we preach the gospel to every nation, then Jesus will automatically return. This is a thrilling idea, but we cannot put ourselves in the driver's seat of God's mission. All we know is that God will advance his good news through his people, and when the time is right, Jesus will return. This has the power to fill us with confidence, boldness, and sacrifice.

Prayer

Father, you have guaranteed that your mission will succeed. This is my confidence before you, that if I ask anything according to your will, you hear me. And if you hear me, I know I have whatever I asked of you. So, fill me now with confidence in your global mission so I have words to fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel. Amen.

DAY 30 **TUESDAY, MARCH 24**

READ JOHN 10:18, 19:28-30

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again,

John 10:18

Like we said in the opening letter of this devotional, this is the is the mountain-top of human history, the defining event of the Christian life. Jesus the Son of God laid down his life and died. He did so willingly in obedience to his Father. He was finishing what had been such a long time coming. He had kept the law we couldn't keep. He had become the sacrifice we couldn't make.

Prayer

Father, your word says "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." Thank you for Christ redeeming us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. I remind myself Christ redeems in order that the blessing given to Abraham might extend to all peoples. Let it continue to come, oh Lord! Amen.

DAY 31 **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25**

READ JOHN 20:21

*Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you!
As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,"*
John 20:21

Just as we've tracked throughout the story, everything begins with God. Out of the overflow of his perfect eternal communion as Father, Son, and Spirit, he initiates. And it starts a chain reaction of sending. Though we might think that sending culminates in the Son, he continues the progression. Just as Jesus was sent on mission from the Father, we are now little sent ones too.

Prayer

Father, knowing what it means to fear you, I want to persuade others. Jesus' love compels me to no longer live for myself, but for him who died for me and was raised again. Yet I often think and act as though others are sent by you, but not me. Thank you for making peace between us through your Son's sacrifice. Help me to extend that peace to others who are far from you, not as a task, but as part of who I am. Amen.

DAY 32 **THURSDAY, MARCH 26**

READ MATTHEW 28:18-20

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has
been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,"*
Matthew 28:18-19

This is the passage we've all been waiting for, right? Here, God's desire for all nations becomes clearer than ever before. God's people are to take the message of the gospel to all nations and teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded. The message of hope is to be actively shared by all of God's people—to all of the nations.

Prayer

Father, this is your will: our sanctification. You desire all who trust in you to be conformed to the image of your Son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Your call to mission is not simply a call to share the gospel, but to make fully mature disciples. Lord, grant me the confidence to pass on to others what I know rather than waiting for more training or knowledge. I trust in the power of Christ in me. Amen.

DAY 33 FRIDAY, MARCH 27

READ ACTS 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*

Acts 1:8

Moments before Jesus ascended into heaven to be with the Father, he reminded his disciples the promised Holy Spirit would come. Jesus made it clear that when the Spirit did come they would be witnesses both to their own people and to the surrounding regions, and then to the very ends of the earth. The missionary Spirit of Christ would be living inside them.

Fasting & Prayer

Each Friday throughout Lent we are calling the church to fasting and prayer. See the fasting guide in the front of the devotional for helpful details. Begin the day by meditating on how the Holy Spirit comes to empower you as a witness. During a fasted meal pray that God would lead you to people that he has prepared to receive the gospel when they hear it, and that God would give you the boldness speak. When you end the fast with a meal, rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit who makes you a witness.

DAY 34 SATURDAY, MARCH 28

READ ACTS 2:1-41

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them,

Acts 2:2-3

Remember the story of the tower of Babel from Genesis 11? There, God judged the people by dispersing their language, which led to the formation of unique people groups all over the world. The coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 is like a bookend to Babel. Notice that the Spirit arrives as “tongues of fire,” allowing the apostles to preach the gospel in the unique languages of the different people groups gathered in Jerusalem. It was the beginning of the scattered peoples of Babel being re-gathered around the risen Christ.

Prayer

Father, when you send forth your Spirit, new creations are made, and you renew the face of the earth. Thank you for establishing your church as a people made up of all nations. Through the church your manifold wisdom is put on display. May you be glorified in your church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen.

DAY 35 **MONDAY, MARCH 30**

READ ACTS 10

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles,
Acts 10:44-45

It may seem like just another turn in the story, but this is the official entrance of the Gentiles into the family of God. The Messiah is for everyone! God confirmed it to Peter through signs and wonders, but we can see it now clearly anticipated throughout the Old Testament. As Gentiles ourselves, this is best news we've ever heard!

Prayer

Father, who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives transgression? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. So often I underestimate your love for me and others. Truly, you don't show favoritism, but accept from every nation the one who fears you. Amen.

DAY 36 **TUESDAY, MARCH 31**

READ ACTS 13:1-3

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off,
Acts 13:2-3

The church at Antioch was not only the first place believers were called Christians, it was also the first church to display its sent-ness. Jesus had not merely commissioned individual believers for his global mission. His universal church is sent as the one great missionary of God. Thus each local church is a church sent and responsible to both their neighborhoods and the nations.

Prayer

Father, your Son laid down his life for his bride, the church. One day she will be united to him fully and forever. But until that day, she is your hands and feet in the world to proclaim the excellencies of you who called her out of darkness and into your marvelous light. Lord, help our church to be faithful in this task, and let me contribute with all I have. Amen.

DAY 37 WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

READ ROMANS 15:20-21

*It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel
where Christ was not known,
Romans 15:20*

Paul the apostle was one of the greatest earthly gifts God has given his church. First, because his story is a testimony to us of God's amazing power and mercy. Second, because he was commissioned to reach the Gentiles. Though he saw outrageous fruit in his ministry, and was a remarkable pastor and theologian, he never settled. He always went where Christ was not yet known.

Prayer

Father, thank you for sending Paul to be a minister of Christ to the Gentiles. He proclaimed the gospel so that they might become an offering acceptable to God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. By the same Spirit who lived in Paul, keep me from settling into what's comfortable and familiar. For I was made to be your salt and light. Amen.

DAY 38 THURSDAY, APRIL 2

READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man
Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people,
1 Timothy 2:5-6*

The urgency of God's mission pivots on this reality: there is only one way back to God and we know who he is! Paul calls us first to pray for all people. Prayer is the fuel of global missions. It's the primary way God has given for all of us to participate in his mission in places we may never go. Through it we can literally change the world.

Prayer

Father, forgive me for my prayerlessness, especially toward those who are separated from Christ and without hope. You have made peace with me through the blood of your Son shed on the cross. My soul knows all his benefits. Move my stubborn heart to care for those who don't know you. Move me to pray for their salvation, not out of guilt, but from the joy of knowing you. Amen.

DAY 39 **FRIDAY, APRIL 3**

READ ROMANS 9:1-5, 10:12-15

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people,

Romans 9:2-3

Though Paul was driven to see the gospel spread among all the Gentiles, his heart was absolutely crushed for his own people, the Jews. Though they had been given the covenants, law, temple, and promises, they had rejected their Savior. Paul grieved over them so much that, if he could have, he would have given himself up for their salvation.

Fasting & Prayer

The spirit of Paul's love and grief is informative of today's fast. Take time early in the day to meditate on a specific lost person or people. As you withhold from eating throughout the day, channel your hunger toward groans for their salvation. Allow yourself to sense their hopelessness and grieve their stubbornness. Conclude the fast with a meal and a spirit of rejoicing in the hope of God's great mercy.

DAY 40 **SATURDAY, APRIL 4**

READ REVELATION 7:9-10

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language...

And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb,"

Revelation 7:9a,10

Lent has been a journey of repentance and preparation for celebrating the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. We have laid our faces in the dirt, lamenting our own brokenness and the world's lostness. As Easter dawns just tomorrow, it's good for our final meditation to be from the coming day when multitudes from every nation, tribe, people, and language will gather and celebrate together "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Prayer

Father, thank you for your grace that has appeared and offered salvation to all people. It teaches me to say "No" to ungodliness and the passions of this world, and to a live self-controlled, upright and godly life in this present age, while I wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of my great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for me to redeem me from all wickedness and to add me to the pure people who are his very own, eager to do what is good. Amen.

NEXT STEPS & RESOURCES

HEAD

Books to help you grow in knowledge and understanding

- International Missions: *Let the Nations be Glad* by John Piper
- Prayer: *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone & Jason Mandryk
- Fasting: *A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer* by John Piper
- Suffering: *Insanity of God* by Nik Ripken

HEART

Tools to help shape and refine your heart and passions

- *Pray*: For our missionaries in Germany & Morocco. Pick up the book *Operation World* and use it as a 365-day prayer guide covering every nation. As you pray, God will give you a heart that burns for the nations of the world.
- *Watch*: Watch: Take some time to watch the sermon, "The History of Redemption," which details the story of redemption from Genesis to Revelation by Ronnie Smith from Austin Stone Community Church. Ronnie was later shot and killed while serving as a missionary in Libya.

HANDS

Action steps toward growth and service

- *Eat*: Find a smaller international restaurant in the city. Choose one that is owned and operated by internationals. Go there often as a family or a community group. Seek to get to know the owners and workers of the restaurant. Share the love of God with them. Also remember to fast on Fridays.
- *Love*: Talk to your missional community about becoming a care team or one of Renaissance's missionaries. Pray for them. Talk with them. Share life with them.
- *Go*: Apply for a Renaissance Mission Trip to Germany. Grab your passport, jump on a plane and take the gospel to the nations.

Sources

- Redeemer Presbyterian Church Lenten Devotional - redeemer.com
- *The Worship Sourcebook*
- Sojourn International Global Trips Guide
- Sojourn International Community Group Global Missions Study