

March 31

N.T. Wright says about Jesus's death on the cross that it was the beginning of a Revolution - a spiritual Revolution. The results of this Revolution, are richer, broader and deeper than the satisfaction of our own personal needs for forgiveness in the present and the promise of eternal life in the future. On a broader scale the cross made a difference in the entire world. Because of the cross, mankind can be restored and reconciled to God so we can now play a vital part in God's purposes for the world. In other words, we who believe have been given the vocation to lovingly reflect God into the world.

Thoughts from "The Day the Revolution Began" by N.T. Wright
Submitted by Myra Brand

April 1 - Easter

The life that burst forth from the tomb on Easter Sunday is more than any of us can understand. We don't even fully understand life itself, much less the *new life* of the Resurrection. No wonder the women were perplexed, no wonder the apostles found it difficult to believe their story. We can understand sin and death, but what is this new life of Easter morning?

The Risen Lord will teach us this, too, as we open our hearts to the new life He has to offer. May this Easter Season deepen our faith in the One who brings us eternal life.

Jesus, our risen Lord, you are with us forever
in all your glory.
Let us be messengers of your joy, living as people
alive in your love.
Because you have overcome death, we too
shall live again!
Help us share the "good news" with others.
Alleluia!

Christ
the Lord
Is Risen
Today!



LENTEN



DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET 2018

Westminster Presbyterian Church
3737 Liberty Rd. S
Salem, OR 97302

Ash Wednesday - February 14

Ashes have been used in Christian churches to mark the beginning of Lent since at least the 10th Century. On the evening of Ash Wednesday we will impose ashes as a physical reminder of both our frailty and our mortality. The words of the committal service that are pronounced at graveside come to my mind: "Unto the mercy of almighty God we commend the soul of our brother or sister departed, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

During Lent we will spend the coming days journeying with Jesus toward the cross; toward the death that ultimately brings, by God's power, resurrection. Lent is, therefore, framed both by our powerlessness and the power of God to bring forth from the ashes of our lives, new life, eternal life; a gift that we cannot grant ourselves. Lent reminds us that in life and death we are completely dependent upon God alone.

During Lent some of us will spend the coming days practicing a new spiritual discipline or giving up something that has a hold on us and seems to be getting in the way of the life we long to live. We will face the challenge of letting go of our past, or ceasing a particular habit and opening ourselves up to God's Spirit in fresh fashion so that God can bring newness of life.

Quite possibly we will take advantage of Lent by taking a personal inventory of ourselves. We will confront and face the challenge of how our lives may have missed the mark when it comes to being the person God has called us to be. So, Lent will be an opportunity (as difficult as may be) to offer confession and to seek with God's help after a new way of living. Or we may risk a reconciliation with someone with whom we have been estranged and begin to rebuild a new relationship from the remnants of the past.

Or, during Lent we may focus our minds and hearts on God's presence with us in a manner we have never done previously. We may invite God's presence into our daily routine by setting aside moments for prayer and reflection. Following the example of Jesus, we spend moments alone with God in prayer.

The Lenten season will be what we choose to make of it. The booklet is designed for you, for your spiritual development, as you reflect not only on your spiritual journey, but also on the spiritual journey of others, as such is highlighted by their contributions within the booklet. Possibly their insights, their words, their experiences will open you to God's power and presence in new and fresh ways.

John Moody

March 30 - Good Friday

THE WORD OF SALVATION

The death of Christ on the cross was God's grand plan of salvation coming to fruition. Yet around the cross we find no evidence of a saving faith. The few faithful gathered at Calvary were there in grief. For the soldiers it was just another day's work. The onlookers who milled around challenged Him to come down and save Himself or joined others who made sport of it all. The prophecy of Isaiah becomes fulfilled in this terrible moment: "He is despised and rejected by men." (Isaiah 53:3.)

In the midst of this scene of mockery and grief there was one exception, one voice that sounded a different note! It didn't seem to fit into that picture of rejection at all. In contrast to the taunting and ridicule, there came a voice saying, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom". (Luke 23:42)

Who said that? Surely it must have been Mary or one of the women or John. But no, not a word came from them, only their inconsolable grief. Perhaps it was the plea of a person whom Jesus had healed. Or perhaps Peter had returned to acknowledge Christ? It was none of these. The words were uttered by the person from whom we would least expect to hear them—a condemned criminal on his own cross next to Jesus, a person whom the world wanted to get rid of, whom they judged unfit to live.

The reply of Jesus is the word of salvation. It comes instantly in response to the man's simple faith. This man, forgotten of all others, now would never be forgotten by God.

The Polish astronomer Copernicus' research and writing on the nature of the solar system radically changed man's conception of the universe. On his deathbed, *The Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies*—his great work, just off the press, was laid in his arms. But in that moment as he came face-to-face with life's ultimate fact, he did not think of himself as a great scientist, mathematician, astronomer, or one of the world's most learned men. He thought of himself as a sinner in need of the grace and salvation of Christ on the cross. His faith and prayer are expressed in the epitaph he wrote for himself which can be read today on his grave: "Lord I do not ask the kindness which Thou didst show to Peter. I do not dare to ask the grace which Thou didst grant to Paul. But Lord, the mercy Thou didst show to the dying robber, that mercy show to me. That earnestly I crave".

We each may pray the prayer of the penitent thief, and praise God, we each may hear Christ's gracious word of salvation and His promise of life eternal.

Prayer:

Dear Savior, as the dying thief in faith looked to You and found forgiveness and eternal life, so I cast myself alone upon the merit of Your infinite sacrifice for me and pray, "Lord, remember me". Amen

Forty Days with the Savior Preparing Your Heart For Easter

by Henry Garipey

submitted by Fran Gratchner

March 28

Where is God for you? Is God "out there" or "up there"? Is God distant or close? (Probably some days more of one and some days more of the other!). Where do you encounter God's presence? As we walk this Lenten journey, how and where do you best meet God along the way? Richard Rohr, a very thoughtful Catholic priest, focuses on seeing all of life as connected and infused with God - if we but have eyes to see. He puts it this way: "Jesus came to put it all together for us. He was saying, in effect, 'To be human is good! The material and the physical can be trusted and enjoyed. This physical world is the hiding place of God and the revelation place of God!'

Far too much of religion has been about defining where God is and where God isn't, picking and choosing who and what has God's image and who doesn't. In reality, it's not up to us. We have no choice in the matter. All are beloved..., made in God's image, indwelt by the Holy Spirit... Can you see the image of Christ in the least of your brothers and sisters? When we can see the image of God where we don't want to see the image of God, then we see with eyes not our own.

Jesus says we have to love and recognize the divine image even in our enemies. Either we see the divine image in all created things, or we don't see it at all. Once we see God's image in one place, the circle keeps widening. It doesn't stop with humans and enemies and the least of our brothers and sisters. It moves to frogs and pansies and weeds.

Everything becomes enchanted with true sight. We cannot not live in the presence of God.. All we can do is allow, trust, and finally rest in it."

Richard Rohr

Submitted by Ken Smith

March 29 - Maundy Thursday

The Perfect Example

If we didn't have a cross on hand as an instant sign of our faith, a towel would be a good second choice. For none of the teachings of Jesus about the greatness of service - not even his words that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life" - are as clear as what he did in the upper room (John 13:1-17).

The disciples arrived, their sandal-clad feet dusty. The customary basin of water and towel were available. I can picture each pretending not to notice - looking up at the ceiling, fumbling with a robe. So *Jesus* picks up the basin and towel and washes their feet. "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example."

Here, instead of "Pick up your cross and follow," Jesus calls, "Pick up your towel." Not many of us are asked to die for Christ, but all of us are asked to live for him. Which is harder, to die for the Lord or live for him? The cross may be the ultimate demand for a few of us, but the towel of service is the Lord's immediate demand on all of us.

Help me, Lord, pick up my TOWEL and follow you.

-from *Listening to Lent* by Robert C. Hereth

February 15

The deepest level of worship is praising God in spite of the pain,
thanking God during the trials,
trusting Him when we're tempted to lose Hope
and LOVING HIM when He seems so distant and far away.

At my lowest, God is my hope.

At my darkest, God is my light.

At my weakest, God is my strength.

At my saddest, God is my comforter.

Spiritual Inspiration

Submitted by Pauline Mather

February 16

THE FOURTH WISEMAN

This story not only relates to our Lord's birth, but to His death. I have always liked the legend of the Fourth Wiseman as it shows us the way to use sacred things for God's purpose. William Barclay has the story in his explanation of Mark 2: 23-28 where Jesus and his disciples are walking through the corn fields on a Sabbath and the Pharisees question Jesus' motives in "working" on the Sabbath. The story goes as follows:

Artaban sets out to follow the star and he takes with him a sapphire, ruby and a pearl for the King. He was trying to catch up to his other three friends. On his way he first meets a traveler stricken with fever and by selling his sapphire, he helps the man to recover. He journeyed on and in due time he came to Bethlehem, but was too late as Mary, Joseph and Jesus were gone. Then came the Herod's command that the children should be slain. He at that time was in a house with a small child and as the soldier came to enter, he gave the ruby to the soldier to keep him from coming in. For years to come, he wandered looking in vain for the King. More than 30 years later passed and he heard that Jesus was going to be crucified and it sounded like the King so he hurried to Calvary. A Maybe his pearl, the loveliest in all the world, could buy the life of the King. Down the street came a girl fleeing from a band of soldiers. "My father is in debt" she cried, "and they are taking me to sell as a slave to pay the debt. Save me! He hesitated, then sadly he took out his pearl, gave it to the soldier and bought the girl's freedom. All of a sudden, the skies darkened and there was an earthquake and a flying tile hit Artaban in the head. He sank half-conscious to the ground and the girl pillowed his head on her lap. Suddenly his lips began to move. "Not so, my Lord. For when did I see you hungry and fed thee? Or when naked, clothed thee? Or when I saw a stranger, took them in? Thirty-three years I have looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King. And then like a whisper from very far away, there came a voice. "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one the least of my brethren, thou has done it unto me." And Artaban smiled in death because he knew that the King had received his gifts.

Submitted by Jim Keehner

February 17

God has two dwelling places--One in heaven and the other in a "thankful" heart.

I like to sit and think about this. How blessed we are to have God-"through the Holy Spirit" dwell in our hearts. It is a warm, comforting feeling - after all the Holy Spirit is our comforter. Because He is, how could we not have a "thankful heart."

There are many things that have given us this thankful heart:

Knowing that God loves us so much that He would come to this earth in the flesh of Jesus Christ His Son.

He would teach, love all people and then suffer so our sins would be paid for. He did this in obedience but also in fear. I am always amazed at His grace for "me" and for "you" as we certainly do not deserve this costly gift. So, my heart is full, and I will always have a "thankful heart" for God to dwell in.

While I am feeling so full of God's love I see how that love continues to bless me in so many ways. I have a loving husband of almost 55 years, have loving children, grandchildren and great grandchildren--and also--each one of you! These seem to be the soft extra gifts given to me. It is up to me how I use these gifts---will I just take them for granted, or will I cherish each moment I have with them? The older I get, the more important the words, cherish and thankfulness become. It is an inner, heartfelt awareness--somehow, I know, that the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in my heart, has a plan for every moment. He is always with us, in the joys and also in the sad, difficult times.

Blessings from a "thankful Heart"--
Submitted by Carolyn Keehner

February 18 - First Sunday in Lent

Jesus, you are our light
and our healing strength.
Take our hands in times of darkness.
Let us be aware of your strong touch
leading us in the right way.
Help us, Lord, to be a light to others,
to be for those who are hurting
a sign of your healing presence.
Open our eyes to all the ways
we can be and do for those who need your love.
Amen.

February 19

"Life is a gift
Let us respond with grace and courtesy."
Maya Angelou
Submitted by Pat Stahl

March 27

Hey Westminster Fam, my name is Taylor. I've been a part of the youth group for four years. Throughout those years I have had amazing opportunities to go on a number of mission trips. I would've never thought those trips would be possible for me before joining. It's all thanks to you guys for sending us, making it happen!

I had the opportunity to be a part of the Houston Mission Trip team this winter. It was a quickly planned trip, but that didn't stop it from being a full trip. While we were in Texas, we worked on three different homes that were being rebuilt following the destruction caused by Hurricane Harvey. My group, specifically, gutted the entire first floor of a home that had had four feet of standing water in it for five days. We had to wear masks and goggles while we tore down all the drywall and insulation from every wall and ceiling. The hardest work was pulling out all the nails from the studs and carrying out all the trash from inside. We had a wheelbarrow for the small stuff, but the big pieces of drywall had to be hand carried out.

Even though shoveling all that crud out of the house was difficult, it was very rewarding seeing our trash pile grow and grow each day. It meant the demolition process was getting closer to being finished. The homeowner came to the house the last day we were working. She said she had tried to tear out some of the drywall herself with two other people, but they were not able to get a lot done with just the three of them. By the end of the week the entire floor was ripped out, leaving only the studs visible, and ready for the next step in preparation for new walls.

She was so very appreciative of the help. That made me and the team feel good about what we were doing, because we were the help she needed. We were also able to spread Jesus' name through our works with her and through the other projects our group did for other homeowners.

Your generous gifts of offering, donations, and many prayers, have helped our youth group grow in our faith through these projects and tangibly impacted lives far from Salem, OR in the name of Jesus.

Submitted by Taylor Monismith
12th Grader

March 25 - Palm Sunday

In our time there is a seeking,
an anxious groping and searching for divine things.
A great loneliness has come over our time,
a loneliness that is found only where godforsakenness reigns.
In the midst of our large cities,
in the greatest, most frantic activity of untold masses of people,
we see the greatest amount of loneliness and homelessness.
But the longing grows that the time will nonetheless come again
when God dwells among people,
when God lets himself be found.

In the middle of this frantic activity
and vociferous extolling of new ways and means
stands the one word of Jesus Christ:
"I am with you..." (Matt. 28:20).

He does not prescribe ways in which we can reach him.

Rather, he says quite simply:

"I am with you."

from Wonder of Wonders by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Submitted by Lucy Foster

March 26

Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. I Peter 4:13

If you are to be used by God, He will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all, they are meant to make you useful in His hands, and to enable you to understand what transpires in other souls so that you will never be surprised at what you come across.

His Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers

February 20

FORGIVENESS

Peter's three denials of Jesus is told in Mark 14: 54, 66-72. William Barclay says in his commentary of Mark, that this story had to come from Peter himself to be recorded as scripture today as he was the only one there. It is believed that Mark used some of Peter's material as he wrote his gospel. That is to say, over and over again Peter must have told the story of his own denial. "That is what I did, and this amazing Jesus never stopped loving me."

There is a story of an evangelist called Brownlow North. He was a man of God, but in his youth, had lived a wild life. One Sunday he was to preach and before he entered the pulpit, a letter was handed to him. The writer recounted a shameful incident in his life before he became a Christian and it stated that if he dared to preach, the person would rise in the church and publicly proclaim what once he had done. North took the letter into the pulpit with him. He read it to the congregation. He told them that it was perfectly true. Then he told them how through Christ he had been forgiven, how he had been enabled to overcome himself and put the past behind him and because of Christ, he had become a new creature. He used his own shame as a magnet to draw men to Christ. That is what Peter did. He told men, "I hurt him, and I let him down like that, and still he loved and forgave me. And he can do the same for you". When we read this passage with understanding, the story of Peter's cowardice becomes an epic of courage and the story of his shame becomes a tale of glory.

May we think of this when we fail and know we are forgiven when we confess to Christ.

Submitted by Jim Keehner

February 21

Transfiguration

Suddenly they saw him the way he was, the way he really was all the time, although they had never seen it before, the glory which blinds the everyday eye and so becomes invisible. This is how he was, radiant, brilliant, carrying joy like a flaming sun in his hands. This is the way he was—is—from the beginning, and we cannot bear it. So he manned himself, came manifest to us; and there on the mountain they saw him, really saw him, saw his light. We all know that if we really see him we die. But isn't that what is required of us? Then, perhaps, we will see each other, too.

--Madeleine L'Engle
Submitted by Susan Ray

February 22

For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. John 6:40F

I saw Jesus last week. He was wearing blue jeans and an old shirt. He was up at the church building. He was alone and working hard. For just a minute He looked like one of our members, but it was Jesus, I could tell by his smile.

I saw Jesus last Sunday. He was teaching a Bible class. He didn't talk real loud or use long words, but you could tell he believed what he said. For just a minute He looked like my Sunday School teacher, but it was Jesus, I could tell by His loving voice.

I saw Jesus yesterday, He was at the hospital visiting a friend who was sick. They prayed together quietly, for just a minute He looked like my preacher, but it was Jesus, I could tell by the tears in His eyes.

I saw Jesus the other day, He was bringing a covered dish over to me because I had been sick. Just for a minute I thought it was my sweet neighbor's gentle hands stroking my shoulder, but it was Jesus. I could feel Him in my soul.

I saw Jesus this morning, He was in the kitchen making my breakfast and fixing me a special lunch. For just a minute He looked like my Mom, but it was Jesus, I could feel the love from His heart.

I see Jesus everywhere, taking food to the sick, being friendly to a newcomer, and for just a minute I think He's someone I know, but it's always Jesus, I can tell by the way He serves.

May someone see Jesus in me today. Jesus is everywhere, and we do see Him in the kind loving eyes of others, the warmth of their hugs and the quiet in the soft-spoken prayers.

How very blessed we all are—

Submitted by Carolyn Keehner

February 23

"I believe
that appreciation is a holy thing -
that when we look for what's best
in a person we happen to be with at the moment,
we're doing what God does all the time.
So in loving and appreciating our neighbor,
we're participating in something sacred."

Fred Rogers

Submitted by Pauline Mather

March 24

Jesus, Thou Divine Companion

Jesus, Thou Divine Companion,
By thy lowly human birth
Thou hast come to join the workers,
Burden-bearers of the earth.
Thou, the Carpenter of Nazareth,
Toiling for Thy daily food,
By thy patience and thy courage
Though has taught us toiling is good.

They who tread the path of labor,
Follow where Thy feet have trod:
They who work without complaining
Do the holy will of God.
Thou, the Peace that passeth knowledge,
Dwellest in the daily strife;
Thou, the Bread of Heaven, art broken
In the sacrament of life.

Every task, however simple,
Sets the soul that does it free;
Every deed of love and kindness,
Done to man is done to Thee.
Jesus, Thou divine Companion
Help us all to work our best;
Bless us in our daily labor,
Lead us to our Sabbath rest.

Henry van Dyke

Submitted by Donna Grupe



LENT

March 22

EVENING PRAYER

My Lord God, I thank you

that you have brought this day to an end;

I thank you that you let body and soul come to rest.

Your hand was over me;

it protected me and preserved me.

Forgive all the faintheartedness, lack of faith,

and unrighteousness of this day,

and help me to gladly forgive those who have wronged me.

Let me sleep in peace under your protection,

and preserve me from the assaults of darkness.

I commend to you those close to me;

I commend to you this house;

I commend to you my body and my soul.

Oh God, may your holy name be praised. Amen.

from Wonder of Wonders by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Submitted by Lucy Foster

March 23

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more.

The psalmist addresses our need for safety and protection as we journey through life, assuring us that our God will help us and keep us safe.

Sometimes we feel alone, forsaken, abandoned, confused. Let's ponder the lyrics of Psalm 121 and allow these words to fill our souls with faith and courage, and rejoice in the earthly and eternal care of our God.

Submitted by Mary Von Schimmelmenn

February 24

John 3: 16–18 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

I write this exactly two weeks after Christmas day. Already we are looking forward to Lent; and to Easter! Joyous celebrations in the church calendar and in our lives. Christmas and Easter can be described as two chapters of the same Book. Cindy Hess Kasper writes:

“Last Easter morning when I walked into church I saw my friend and greeted her, ‘Happy Christmas!’ I quickly corrected myself. ‘I mean, Happy Easter!’

‘Can’t have one without the other’, she smiled. How true! Without Christmas, there wouldn’t be an Easter. And without the resurrection, Christmas day would be just another day. In fact, we wouldn’t even be in church.

Christmas and Easter are the most joyful celebrations of the year for the Christian. In the first, the incarnation is celebrated (God taking on flesh and coming into the world). In the second, Jesus’ resurrection is celebrated. From the beginning of time, these two days were inextricably linked in the master plan of the Father. Jesus was born to die for our sins and to conquer death so that we could live.

Which is more important? Christmas---the birth of the infant Jesus? Or Easter---the death and resurrection of the man, God’s Son? Both are essential---and both are clear evidence of the Father’s love for us.

Happy Christmas! And Happy Easter!”

Prayer: Thank you, our loving Heavenly Father, for your great love for humankind, that you gave us your precious Son, Jesus, to redeem us. We claim with joy Jesus’ words that those who believe in Him, even though they die will live. We rejoice that we serve a living Savior. AMEN.

Submitted by Karen Heuberger

February 25 - Second Sunday in Lent

Don’t judge each day by the
harvest you reap but by the seeds
that you plant.

Robert Louis Stevenson
Submitted by Alicia Bonesteele

February 26

When the Gospels went viral

During this time of Lent I found myself marveling that Gospel stories of The Cross spread so quickly over such a wide geographical area during the first century. The audience Jesus spoke to was isolated by language, religion and culture to an area remote from the large population centers of the then known world. But, by the end of the Fourth Century the Jesus Movement had spread west as far as Ireland, farther north in Europe, and farther south in Africa.

We know from Luke's Book of Acts that the story of The Cross was spread by Paul and the Apostles throughout the Jewish world and in nearby areas of the Greek and Roman world; but eye witness accounts by the Apostles themselves probably ended around 90 AD. So how did God spread The Story of The Cross after the first century—more to my point, how did God spread the meaning of The Story?

To complicate my question even more, I learned that, for the next 200 years, the persecution of Christians intensified and became more widespread. This means to me that almost all comprehensive missionary work was severely hampered and all written documents the Roman authorities could get their hands on were destroyed. The widespread persecutions ended with the death of Emperor Diocletian in 305 AD. Eight years later the successor, Emperor Constantine, in 313 AD issued the Edict of Milan which established religious toleration for Christianity within the Roman Empire.

At the end of the era of widespread Christian persecution there was a severe shortage of the written documents out of which the Canon was being formed. Although the literacy level was very low in populated areas beyond Israel and the Middle East, many leaders in the Jesus Movement could read, and many written accounts of Jesus's story are known to have existed in the first century. So, the shortage threatened to curtail Church growth. After the Edict of Milan, missionaries were free to travel to far lands and many new churches were planted.

The urgent need for copies of the early Christian writings out of which the Bible was structured was met by the establishment of large copying centers in the larger population centers—Alexandria Egypt, Antioch Syria and other locations. The volume of replacement copies was sufficient to meet the need. And, as the young people of today might say,

. . . then the stories of Jesus and The Cross went viral!

Submitted by Bert Kersh

February 27

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Submitted by Shelley Whitaker

March 20

Atonement Redefined

A young friend said to me during Holly Week, "I cannot cope with the atonement."

Neither can I, if the atonement is thought of forensically. In forensic terms, the atonement means that Jesus had to die for us in order to atone for all our awful sins, so that God could forgive us. In forensic terms, it means that God cannot forgive us unless Jesus is crucified and by this sacrifice atones for all our wrongdoing.

But that is not what the word means! I went to an etymological dictionary and looked it up. It means exactly what is says, at-one-ment. I double-checked it in a second dictionary. There is nothing about crime and punishment in the makeup of that word. It simply means to be at one with God. Jesus on the cross was so at-one with God that death died there on Golgotha, and was followed by the glorious celebration of the Resurrection.

--Madeleine L'Engle
Submitted by Susan Ray

Jesus, At-One

For Jesus, at-one-ment was not being at-one only with the glory of the stars, or the first daffodil in the spring, or a baby's laugh. He was also at-one with all the pain and suffering that ever was, is, or will be. On the cross, Jesus was at-one with the young boy with cancer, the young mother hemorrhaging, the raped girl. And perhaps the most terrible anguish came with being at-one with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the death chambers at Belsen, the horrors of radiation in the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It came from being at-one with the megalomania of the terrorist, the coldness of heart of "good" people, or even the callous arrogance of the two men in criminal court.

We can withdraw, even in our prayers, from the intensity of suffering. Jesus, on the cross, experienced it all. When I touch the small cross I wear, that, then, is the meaning of the symbol.

--Madeleine L'Engle
Submitted by Susan Ray

March 21

"Use your eyes as if tomorrow you will be stricken blind....Hear the music of the voices, the song of the bird, the mighty strains of the orchestra, as if you would be stricken dead tomorrow. Touch each object as if tomorrow your tactile senses would fail. Smell the perfume of the flowers, taste with relish each morsel, as if tomorrow you could never smell and taste again. Make the most of every sense; glory in all the facets of pleasure and beauty which the world reveals to you."

Helen Keller
Submitted by Donna Grupe

March 18 - Fifth Sunday in Lent

There In God's Garden

There in God's garden stands the Tree of wisdom,
whose leaves hold forth the healing of the nations.

Tree of all knowledge, Tree of all compassion,
Tree of all beauty.

Its name is Jesus, name that says, 'Our Savior!'
There on its branches see the scars of suffering;
see where the tendrils of our human selfhood
feed on its life-blood.

Thorns not its own are tangled in its foliage;
our greed has starved it; our despite has choked it.
Yet look, it lives! Its grief has not destroyed it,
nor fire consumed it.

See how its branches reach to us in welcome;
hear what the voice says, 'Come to me, ye weary!'
Give me your sickness, give me all your sorrow.
I will give blessing.'

This is my ending; this my resurrection;
into your hands, Lord, I commit my spirit.
This have I searched for; now I can possess it.
This ground is holy!

All heaven is singing, 'Thanks to Christ, whose Passion
offers in mercy healing, strength and pardon.
Peoples and nations, take it, take it freely!'
Amen! My Master!

Pécseleyi Király Imre (c.1590-1641), Reformed Hungarian pastor
A 17th c. hymn text filled with imagination, allusions, metaphors,
and language evoking parables
Glory to God Hymn #226
Submitted by Linda McCreery

March 19

"Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897), an unschooled French girl who died at age 24, intuited the path of descent and called it her "Little Way." She said (and I summarize), 'I looked at the flowers in God's garden and I saw great big lilies and beautiful roses, and I knew I could never be one of those. But I looked over in the corner and there was a little violet that nobody would notice. That's me. That's what God wants me to be.' Therese knew that all we can give to God is simply who we really are; or even better, 'To do very little things with great love,' which was her motto. That's all God wants from any of us. It's not the perfection of the gift that matters to God; it's the desire to give the gift that pleases God."

From Richard Rohr's daily meditation,
available online at Meditations@cac.org
Submitted by Ken Smith

February 28

During the weeks prior to Jesus' crucifixion, He spoke to his disciples multiple times about what was going to happen when he entered Jerusalem for the Passover Celebration. It seems that they did not understand the gravity of what he was telling them about his impending death. There are however, two women who did understand and who wanted to do something to prepare Jesus for the death that was to come.

In Matthew 26:6-13, we read that Jesus was having dinner at Simon the Leper's house, when an unnamed woman entered the room and opened an alabaster box containing a costly perfume, which she poured on Jesus' head. In John 12:1-8, we read that Jesus was in Bethany as the guest of honor at a dinner where Martha, Mary and Lazarus were also in attendance. During the evening, Mary takes a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume, pours it on Jesus' feet and wipes His feet with her hair. Even though guests at both of these dinners criticized the women for wasting these perfumes, Jesus said that the perfumes were for "the day of my burial." (John 12:7)

Both of these women gave Jesus their most precious gift in order to prepare and honor him for the gift he was about to give to all of mankind: His life, not just for that generation, but for all of the generations to come. They recognized both his humanity and his divinity and poured out their worship and devotion to Him.

During this season of Lent, what is your "alabaster box," i.e., your most precious gift: Will you anoint Jesus with its contents and pour out your love and worship to Him?

Gospel singer, Cece Winans, recorded a beautiful song called "Alabaster Box," which you can watch on YouTube.

Submitted by Carolyn Jones

March 1

Bible passages on seeking happiness.

Matthew 6:25

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. 4. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Submitted by Mary Snethen

March 2

"In John Bunyan's famous "Pilgrim's Progress" (1678) Christian is trudging along, weighed down with a huge burden. Eventually he comes to a place where, in Bunyan's matchless description:

'There stood a Cross, and a little below in the bottom,
a sepulcher. So I saw in my Dream, that just as Christian came
up with the Cross his Burden loosed from off his shoulders, and
fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to
do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulcher, where it fell in,
and I saw it no more...

Then was Christian glad and lightsome and said with a merry
heart,

'He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death.'
Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder; for it was very
surprising to him, that the sight of the Cross should thus
ease him of his Burden.'"

Quoted by N.T. Wright in "The Day the Revolution Began"
Submitted by Myra Brand

March 3

I am the one whose praise echoes on high.

I adorn all the earth.

I am the breeze that nurtures all things green.

I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.

I am led by the spirit to feed the purest streams.

I am the rain coming from the dew

that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.

I am the yearning for good.

Hildegard of Bingen
Submitted by Deanie Anderson

March 4— Third Sunday in Lent

"Seek to live in the present moment, where My Presence awaits you
continually. Refresh yourself in My nearness, letting My Love soak into
your innermost being. Relax with Me, putting aside problems so you can
be attentive to Me and receive more of My Love. Your soul thirsts for Me,
but often you don't realize what you're really longing for: Awareness of
My Presence. Let me lead you beside quiet waters and restore your soul."

from "Jesus Always" by Sarah Young
Submitted by Diane Stegmeir

March 16

Bread for the World

Give us this day our daily bread. Not mine, but ours—everybody's. Our responsibility to the starving world is implicit in that sentence. As long as any part of the body is hungry, the entire body knows starvation. But again, we do not need to think of our obligations in terms of success; we would fail to do anything at all if we knew we had to succeed. We simply do what we can; offer our little loaves and fishes and leave the rest to the Lord.

The story of the loaves and fishes is something explained away in a reasonable sort of manner. It was something like a potluck supper, I have been told. The people who had been listening to Jesus were so moved by his words that when it came time to eat, those who had brought enough picnics with them shared their food around.

The reasonable explanations don't really make much sense. Jesus took the stuff of nature, bread and fish, and working from what already existed, multiplied it. He refused to turn stones into bread, which he could have done. But stones are not bread; they are stones. Instead, when he fed the multitudes, he took the loaves, he took the fish, and there was enough for everybody. In John's Gospel it is pointed out that a lad came up and *offered* what he had, and this act of offering was essential for the miracle.

Another important part of the miracle is Jesus' concern for the fragments, because he is always concerned about the broken things, the broken people. Only when we realize that we are indeed broken, that we are not independent, that we cannot do it ourselves, can we turn to God and take that which he has given us, no matter what it is, and create with it.

--- Madeleine L'Engle
Submitted by Susan Ray

March 17

The Cross in story, image and song, has a power to move us at such a deep level. The following is a true story:

"A Roman Catholic archbishop described how three mischievous young lads decided to play a trick on the priest who was hearing confessions in their local church. They took turns going into the confessional and "confessing" all sorts of terrible sins and crimes to see if the priest would react. Two of them then made off in a hurry; but the priest stopped the third one and, as though taking him seriously, announced that he was going to impose a penance on him. The lad was to walk up to the far end of the church, toward the figure of Jesus hanging on the cross. He was to look Jesus in the face and to say three times, 'You did all that for me, and I don't give 'that' much' - snapping his fingers on the word 'that'. The young man did it once. He did it a second time. Then he found he couldn't do it the third time, but instead dissolved into tears. He left the church a changed person. 'And the reason I know that story,' concluded the archbishop, 'is that I was that young man.'"

Quoted by N.T. Wright in "The Day the Revolution Began"
submitted by Myra Brand

March 14

Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)

You call me out upon the waters
 The great unknown where feet may fail
 And there I find You in the mystery
 In oceans deep my faith will stand
 And I will call upon Your name
 And keep my eyes above the waves
 When oceans rise
 My soul will rest in Your embrace
 For I am Yours and You are mine
 Your grace abounds in deepest waters
 Your sovereign hand will be my guide
 Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me

You've never failed and You won't start now
 Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
 Let me walk upon the waters
 Wherever You would call me
 Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
 And my faith will be made stronger
 In the presence of my Savior
 I will call upon Your name
 Keep my eyes above the waves
 My soul will rest in Your embrace

By Hillsong
 Submitted by Linda McCreery

March 15

LENT

Lent is a season of mixed emotions,
 a torrent of feelings that are all important.
 We feel sorrow because of the death of our Lord,
 yet we feel joy at his resurrection and ours as well.
 We feel calm during this season of quiet waiting,
 but we feel anxious for Easter to come.
 We wait for a celebration of God's glory,
 a glory that surpasses time and waiting.
 We must not forget this season's purpose,
 we tend to take for granted the precious gift we've received.
 The greatest gift that ever will be given,
 we must not forget that Jesus died for our sins.
 He forgave us on the cross,
 and opened up the heavens for us.
 It is a time to remember all of our loved ones,
 those with us and those residing with Jesus.
 It is a time of thanksgiving for all of God's grace,
 a time of believing in God and the Son.
 All seasons mean different things to different people,
 but remember during Lent, God's love for us all.

By David Negstad
 Submitted by Paul Negstad

March 5

Ralph Waldo Emerson quotes on seeking a life well lived:

Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.

For every minute you are angry you lose sixty seconds of happiness.

Live in the sunshine, swim the sea, drink the wild air.

Submitted by Mary Snethen

March 6

The crucifixion of Jesus and the symbol of the cross still carries enormous power in our world. The youthful organization calling itself the "Jesus Army" on its website, includes these words:

"You can't get away from it, It's everywhere.

The Cross,
 In homes, in films, in paintings, in pop videos.
 Worn as an earring, on a necklace. Stitched or studded onto
 leather or denim
 Tattooed onto skin...

What would Coca Cola or McDonald's give to own a symbol that
 millions wear

around their necks every day.

The Cross is the universal Christian symbol, acknowledged by
 millions of Christians
 everywhere as the single visual sign of their faith.

Which is weird, isn't it? Because the cross was originally a symbol
 of suffering and defeat. The Roman empire killed thousands of enemies by
 nailing them to wooden crosses. It's like wearing a gallows around your
 neck. Or hanging a little golden lethal injection from your necklace.

Jesus Christ was executed 2,000 years ago by the Romans.
 But Christians believe Jesus didn't stay dead - that Jesus beat death and
 rose again. beyond death's reach. That makes the Cross not a sign of
 death,

but a sign of the END of death.

A sign of hope, a sign of endless possibility for every
 human being.

That's why Christians wear crosses....

The cross of Jesus means we can be forgiven and can
 have a fresh start.

Even death's been clobbered.
 It's worth shouting about."

Submitted by Myra Brand

March 7

"It is crucial to remember that what you can see of reality is only a very small piece of the whole. When Elijah was deeply discouraged, he said he was the only one who had remained faithful. Yet there were thousands in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal. Elijah was blinded by his isolation and his discouragement. Similarly, Elisha's servant was terrified because he couldn't see what Elisha saw: Horses and chariots of fire all around to protect them from enemy forces. Beloved, not only am I with you, but I have unlimited resources to help you. So look beyond the way things appear, and take courage!"

from "Jesus Always" by Sarah Young
Submitted by Diane Stegmeir

March 8

More Ralph Waldo Emerson quotes on seeking a life well lived:

The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship.

It is one of the blessings of old friends that you can afford to be stupid with them.

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.

Submitted by Mary Snethen

March 9

There is not one blade of grass,
there is no color in this world,
that is not intended to make us rejoice.

John Calvin
Submitted by Deanie Anderson

March 10

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning,
but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

Maria Robinson
Submitted by Alicia Bonesteele

March 11 - Fourth Sunday in Lent

I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.

Martin Luther

March 12

Pansy - thoughts:

"We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

2 Cor. 10:5b

Daisy - purity/innocence:

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."
Proverbs 4:23

Delphinium - boldness:

The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion."
Proverbs 28:1

Apple blossom - promise:

Be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."
Hebrews 13:5b

Hydrangea - perseverance:

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."
Hebrews 12:1b

Gladiolus - strength (of character):

"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."
Psalm 73:26

Honeysuckle - devoted love

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."
Jeremiah 31:3

Submitted by Pat Stahl

March 13

It is not about how much you do,
but how much love you put into what you do
that counts.

Mother Teresa
Submitted by Alicia Bonesteele