

Psalm 129:3 The plowers plowed on my back; They made their furrows long.

This verse from Psalm 129 has always left a profound impression on me in my readings and reflections on the Psalms. It offers a stark depiction of a brutal reality – the act of scourging, also known as whipping. When we hear the word “whip,” we might think of Indiana Jones and his iconic tool, useful for many purposes but not typically associated with inflicting severe bodily harm. However, a scourge is far more sinister.

A scourge consists of a handle wrapped in leather, with multiple braided cords extending from it. Each cord is tipped with a knot containing something sharp at its center. When wielded, this instrument of torture is swung with full force onto the victim’s back, ensuring that as many of the cords as possible dig into the flesh. Upon withdrawal, the scourge tears strips of flesh from the victim’s body, leaving their back resembling a plowed field. Throughout history, many Christians, including St. Paul, endured this agonizing torture. Paul himself recounted receiving forty stripes minus one on five separate occasions. However, the ultimate fulfillment of this verse is found in our Lord Jesus Christ. Pilate ordered Jesus to be scourged before His crucifixion, fulfilling both Isaiah’s prophecy (“by His stripes we are healed”) and the words of this Psalm.

But what became of those who inflicted this brutality upon Jesus? They met their demise or fell into obscurity. Pilate’s once-glorious career faded into insignificance, akin to grass withering on a rooftop. Herod and his descendants met similar fates, ultimately becoming food for worms. As for Satan, the architect of rebellion, his destiny is the lake of fire.

So, when we endure suffering in this world, let us remember our Savior who endured unimaginable pain on our behalf. Just as His enemies did not prevail against Him, they will not prevail against us. Even when the furrows on our backs seem endless, let us remain steadfast in our faith. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 130:6 My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning—Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.

How many of us have ever pulled an all-nighter, whether to study for a test, finish a crucial paper, or prepare for an important meeting? It’s a delicate balance between how much caffeine our bodies can handle and how much we need to stay awake. It becomes a race against time and our own physical limitations. However, in those situations, our minds are actively engaged with the task at hand.

Now, imagine a different scenario. You’re not writing, reading, or planning. Instead, you’re simply sitting and watching, keeping vigil for potential enemies who may or may not arrive during the night. You have a light source, but its reach is limited, leaving anything beyond its glow shrouded in uncertainty. And when do you get to stop watching? Only when someone comes to relieve you in the morning.

This is the image painted by the Psalmist here—a profound longing for the eagerly anticipated morning. It’s a moment that feels interminable when you’re the one waiting.

But what is the Psalmist waiting for? He’s waiting for Jesus Christ. He’s awaiting the realization of forgiveness, the Messiah’s crucifixion on the cross. His soul cries out for this forgiveness, recognizing its desperate need for it. And we, too, wait alongside the Psalmist, albeit on the other side of the cross. Our anticipation is not for the death and resurrection of our Lord but for His glorious return. We wait knowing that in Him lies the forgiveness of sins, mercy, and glory. In Him rests the salvation of the true Israel—those who place their trust in Jesus Christ.

The night may be dark, dear brothers and sisters, but rest assured, morning is on its way. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

With our extensive study of the Psalms this Lent, you might be expecting a study to follow of Psalm 22, where Jesus quotes these words from as He hangs on the cross. However, I'd rather focus on the quote that Jesus spoke, and how those who heard Him reacted.

I'm sure that there are times in your life, when you have been at your lowest, when you have been bruised, battered, beaten down, humiliated, mocked, belittled, shamed, and all sorts of other things, when you have felt like God has abandoned you. Or maybe you've felt like everyone is pulling away from you, and you're becoming more and more isolated, and finally, when everyone else has cut you off, God too has left you to suffer alone. Well, these are things that Jesus truly does understand. His brutal treatment up to this point included a crooked trial, beatings, scourging, mocking, spitting, and finally nailing Him naked to the cross. And starting with the betrayal of Judas, all his followers and disciples have fled, leaving only John and His mother there with Him. Where were the crowds who shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David”? And, of course, where was God the Father? He could not intervene to save His Son, not like He had saved Abraham's son Isaac. He had to let Jesus die for the sins of the world.

And as He is dying, there are the people He's dying to save. Those who should have welcomed Him, and they don't even recognize one of the Psalms. They have so hardened their hearts, that when Jesus quotes God's Word they cannot recognize it. But, even in this sorrow, in this abandonment, Jesus does not give up. He continues on, for you. He dies, alone, for you. You, dear reader, are worth it. And so Jesus endures all of this, to save you. In His precious name, Amen.

Psalm 128:4 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.

Have you met “pet parents” and their “fur babies”? Those people who, when asked, say that they have children, and then tell you about their dogs or cats, but they don't actually have any *human* children. If you dare suggest that their dog or cat isn't really a child, they get very offended. Now, don't get me wrong, we should be good stewards of the animals entrusted to our care, but those animals are not children. Our world wants to treat them the same way, and in doing so, denigrate our children. After all, if we put down our dog when he gets too old, why should it be a stretch to put down grandpa when he gets too old. Or if we euthanize puppies that nobody wants, what's wrong with killing babies outside of the womb that no one wants?

And you, they would say, you filthy Christian, how dare you pollute our world with more of your offspring? While I don't hear that one out loud, it is often what the world is thinking. Children aren't seen as a blessing; they're seen as something to acquire when you're prepared, or to avoid because they're simply a drain on your resources and they take away your freedom. After all, women shouldn't be in the heart of your house, they should be out in the workforce, submitting to her boss instead of her husband.

But the Psalmist gives us a completely different picture. Children are not a burden; they are a blessing. Olives are a cash crop, and their oil is greatly sought after even today. A Christian marriage and Christian children are never a burden, but a blessing just as the Psalmist declares. A blessing for the man who fears Jesus Christ, the giver of all good things. So, let us stop listening to the world, and listen to our Lord, and embrace the blessings that He gives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

What are you praying for?

Are you hoping for a healthy child? Asking God to bless the addition on your house? Pleading that our Lord continue to grant you good health? It's common, habitual, and even easy for many of us to go to our Father, and ask for good things—and we should! Many of us know we can approach the Savior and ask of him boldly. Not only is God our father and friend, he is the LORD. He ordains all things.

Thus the psalmist places things in God's hand: Big things. His home. His city. His Children. For the Psalmist knows that unless the Lord takes care of everything it will all fall apart... Why? This is what the LORD has promised. Israel is His treasured possession he is the one that brings blessing, and culls calamity. He is the one who will send King Messiah.

Indeed, the LORD proved His love by placing each and every difficulty on King Messiah's shoulders. He bore each prayer for health, prosperity and children. He answered the call even as his children fail to ask Him, and fail to trust His response.

Since we have a God who does all that, we can ask with the psalmist that God take care of everything. He will manage our good. He will sustain our communities. He will help us bear our pain. May we pray today and every day: Father, into your hands I commit all things, and most certainly, my spirit. Amen.

Psalm 131:2 Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Many of you are likely quite familiar with this Psalm, as it marks the final prayer of the day for those who follow the discipline of the Sons of Solomon. This brief yet profound Psalm serves as a perfect way to wind down the day, releasing the burdens we carry and finding peace in the midst of life's uncertainties.

It may come as a surprise to some that this Psalm is attributed to David, especially when we read the opening verse declaring that David's heart is not haughty. Isn't this the same David who once sought to build a house for the Lord and later succumbed to the temptation of Bathsheba? Indeed, it is. However, it was also David who humbly accepted the rebuke of the Lord and repented of his wrongdoing. It is this humility, the willingness to acknowledge Jesus' righteousness over his own, that brings true rest. Similarly, we too can find rest by submitting to the truth of Jesus' Word, even when it challenges our feelings or desires.

In a similar vein, there is comfort in accepting our heavenly Father's authority, akin to a child accepting the simple directive, "Because I said so." Just as young children learn to trust their parents' guidance, we must trust in the wisdom and love of our heavenly Father. As for the reference to a weaned child, it signifies a child who has matured beyond solely crying out for its needs and has learned to express its hunger. Likewise, our souls yearn to understand how God could possibly love us despite our flaws, sins, and failures. The simple yet profound answer lies in His unwavering love for us, simply because He does.

This enduring love and comfort remain constant, regardless of our age, intelligence, or stature. God's love for us is rooted in His unchanging nature, providing us with a steadfast source of hope and security. Therefore, let us place our trust in Him and rest assured in His protective embrace. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Psalm 132:18 His enemies I will clothe with shame, But upon Himself His crown shall flourish.”

Poetry and song possess a unique power to convey deep meanings through their choice of words. Consider the difference between “Miter Him with many miters” and “Crown Him with many crowns.” Though both refer to headwear symbolizing authority, the latter carries a far greater resonance. In this Psalm, a hymn of thanksgiving to God for His promise to David, the final verse contains a word in English translated as “crown,” which in Hebrew is נֵזֶר (Nezer).

The fate of Jesus’ enemies is clear—they will be clothed in shame. Without the righteousness provided by Jesus’ sacrifice, our garments are comparable to filthy rags or clothing soaked in sewage, impossible to cleanse. However, Jesus offers us His righteousness, purchased with His own blood shed on the cross, thereby clothing us in purity.

Yet, it’s the destiny of the Messiah’s crown that is truly remarkable. Despite being initially adorned with thorns—symbols of death, pain, and piercing—the Messiah’s crown will flourish. The thorns will wither away, no longer needed, and new life will sprout forth from what was once dead. It’s a profound image of transformation and renewal.

Moreover, the choice of the word “Nezer” holds significance. Jesus, growing up in Nazareth and being called a Nazarene, emerged from a place unexpected to bring about the greatest good. Just as Nathaniel questioned, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” the answer is a resounding yes—Jesus, the Messiah, came from the most unlikely of places. Similarly, He reaches out to us, offering His righteousness and grace.

As we await the flourishing of His crown, let us take comfort in the unexpected ways in which Jesus works in our lives, clothing us in His righteousness and offering us salvation. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 126:5 Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy.

Psalm 126 resonates with joy after sorrow, recalling Israel’s exile from the promised land and their eventual return. For those familiar with the Psalms, the sorrow of exile is palpable, as depicted in Psalm 137:1: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.” Today, however, we rejoice in the return of the exiles.

The return from Babylon is a remarkable event often misunderstood. Contrary to popular belief, it was not a triumphant plundering akin to the Exodus from Egypt. Not all exiles returned; some had acclimated to life under the Babylonian/Persian rule and chose to remain in their newfound homes. Yet those who remembered God’s promises returned, despite the hardships and dangers awaiting them, they returned to the Word of God.

Psalm 126 reflects this reliance on God, attributing the return not to Israel’s triumph but to God’s intervention. Their return is marked by joy, laughter, and songs of praise for what God has done. Similarly, we find ourselves living in lands governed by the wicked, yet knowing our true kingdom lies with our King, Jesus Christ, in the promised land.

Each of us experiences a form of exile in this world, but there will come a day when our exile ends. Tears of both sorrow and joy will be shed, as we long to be with Christ. With faith and perseverance, we await that day, knowing that our exile will soon conclude. Perhaps tomorrow, our exile will end with Jesus’ return. Let us remain steadfast in faith until that glorious day, brothers and sisters. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people From this time forth and forever.

We often think of Jerusalem as being built ON a mountain. However, it is more accurate to say that Jerusalem is built IN the mountains. Jerusalem is in the mountain range of the Judean Hills and is as such surrounded by hills higher than itself. This gives us a more complete image of Psalm 125, which is one of the Psalms of Ascent, sung by the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The Israelites would literally have to walk up these surrounding hills on one side and then down them on the other side to reach Jerusalem.

Strategically this put Jerusalem in a vulnerable position, since enemy armies would have the higher ground and look down into the city as they attacked. So, why then does the Psalmist say that Mount Zion cannot be moved and that it abides forever, if it is so vulnerable? Because it is not just the mountains that surround Jerusalem, but “the Lord surrounds His people.” God’s people are not preserved because they are inherently better or more powerful, but because God protects His people. Those who trust in the Lord abide forever because God surrounds them with His protection.

The most important hill to surround Jerusalem is Golgotha, Mt. Calvary. Geographically it is insignificant, but from this hill the Lord has brought us salvation! Indeed, the Lord surrounds His people, not like an approaching enemy but like the Crucified One who laid down His life to save us. From the least of these mountains our Lord Jesus shed His blood to protect us from our worst enemies: sin, death, and the devil. From this hill Jesus gives us peace that surpasses all understanding, fulfilling the blessing: “Peace be upon Israel!”

Psalm 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity!

If I were to write this psalm, I would pick different imagery to depict “refreshing unity.” I might compare the refreshment to drinking a cool beer or jumping in a pool after a hot day of mowing the lawn (to each his own). The Psalmist compares the pleasantness of unity to “precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments” (v 2) and as “the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion” (v 3). The metaphors may be somewhat lost to us, since no one covers themselves in oil anymore, nor do we understand the dew descending from snow-capped Mount Hermon.

But we do understand the cleanliness of a shower. We understand the power of a rainstorm after a drought. We understand how God refreshes our soul with forgiveness. We understand that it is refreshing to hear someone say the truth rather than futz about with lies and half-truths. Instead of dulling our minds with the latest entertainment, maybe we need more of this pleasant refreshment. For it is only when we have worked hard do we enjoy the beauty of God’s goodness and truth in this life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 134:3 The LORD who made heaven and earth Bless you from Zion!

Psalm 134 is a short Psalm, only three short verses. And all of it centers around the idea of blessing. A simple concept for a simple Psalm, right? But what does it mean to bless? We throw the phrase around, for example when someone sneezes and we respond with, “bless you.” If you anger someone in the South, you will often hear the phrase, “Oh, bless his heart.” And we will ask someone, hopefully the head of the household, to bless the meal before we dig in and eat. But what does that mean? And what’s the difference between us blessing God and God blessing us? Deep questions for a little Psalm.

We’ll start with the meaning of “bless.” The word in Hebrew is בָּרַךְ, (baruch), and it originally meant to kneel. So to bless someone was to kneel before them, to humble yourself and to elevate them. So our Psalmist begins the Psalm with a call for all those who are servants of Jesus Christ to bless Him. To kneel before Him as He is worthy of our praise and our worship. He, who made heaven and earth, who took His people out of slavery in Egypt, who by a mighty hand brought them through the Red Sea, who drove out the peoples before Him. Kneel before Him and exalt Him, all you His servants!

But then we have the third verse. Now we turn it on its head. The creator of heaven and earth will kneel and lift us up. And where will this happen? It will happen on Zion, His holy hill. And while the Psalmist was looking forward to it, we can look back and see it through the Gospel. For there, on Zion, outside the walls of Jerusalem, Jesus was humbled, taking all the sins of the world on Himself while He died on the cross. And from that cross He lifted us all up, lifted us out of death and brought us into life eternal. So yes, Jesus Christ who made heaven and earth HAS blessed us from Zion, and now let us bless His holy name with all that we have. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

John 19:26b – 27a [Jesus] said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!”

My wife loves to work on figuring out puzzles, and so do many of my children. They find joy in seeing a picture take shape as each piece is added. And finally, when the picture is completed, they rejoice over solving the puzzle and seeing the full picture. However, there is no marvel over any single one of those pieces. Many people think of God that way, that He’s out there putting together this great puzzle and if He loses a piece, He’ll just make another. But that’s not what we see in Jesus’ word from the cross today. We see a son who loves His mother and wants to make sure she’s taken care of. So He gives her into the care of not just anyone, but the one disciple that He knows is going to survive into his old age.

That’s great that we see Jesus’ compassion and humanity on display here, but what does that mean for any of us? It demonstrates Jesus’ concern for each of us, particularly those who lack the ability to care for themselves. Even amid His own excruciating pain and suffering, Jesus shows compassion for the grieving and the mournful. He sees and acknowledges your pain, standing by you in whatever trial you face. You need only call upon His name, expressing your struggles through prayer and finding solace in the Psalms. For our God is not distant but ever near, ready to provide comfort and support. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 124:4 – 5 **Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul; Then the swollen waters Would have gone over our soul.**

David employs a powerful metaphor in this Psalm, reminding his people that their triumph over their adversaries is not their own doing but God's. Just as David's victory over the giant Goliath was not his own achievement but the Lord's, he emphasizes that without God standing guard over His people, they would have been swept away like a flood. Think of the countless times vast armies have gathered against God's people; one prominent example is the Assyrian army under Sennacherib besieging Jerusalem. Yet, God decimated that army and rescued His people. The overwhelming forces of Assyria were no match for God's protection, akin to spray crashing against a sturdy coastal rock.

David draws on familiar images from Israelite history—the Exodus and the Flood—to illustrate his point. In the Exodus, God's people faced the Red Sea with their enemies closing in, but God intervened, parting the waters and leading them to safety. Without God's divine intervention, they would have been engulfed and consumed by the waters. Similarly, in the story of the Flood, had God not instructed Noah to build the Ark and sheltered them within, humanity would have perished in the deluge that engulfed the earth.

These accounts serve as a precursor to our ultimate deliverance through baptism. Just as the waters of the Red Sea and the Flood did not destroy God's people but saved them, so too does baptism deliver us from the clutches of the devil. Death's grip is broken, and victory over death is assured. Therefore, when you feel overwhelmed during Lent or any other time in your life, do not dread the waters. Your baptismal waters are your salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 135:13 **Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your fame, O LORD, throughout all generations.**

When we hit a certain age, we realize that we won't be around forever. That eventually we will be called home to Jesus and the world will continue on without us, or at least until Jesus comes back. For some that means looking back on the past and remembering the good ol' days. For others it means looking toward the future, wondering if anything that you have built will endure. And we look all around us, and see things crumbling. We see Roman roads and bridges that lasted for over a millennia, and our own roads can't seem to last through a single winter. We see buildings boarded up, and the paint fading away, and other buildings just abandoned, left to the mercy of the elements. But don't look at those, cries city hall, look at this brand-new gas station, surely that means that things are good, right? I'm sure that Egypt thought that things were going well; they just had to fix their uppity slave issue, and they could build back better. I'm sure Sion and Og thought that surely their kingdoms would endure, but do you even know who they were? The fame of this world is fleeting, the victories in this life are but a puff of smoke.

But there is a king and a kingdom that endures forever. And this is Jesus Christ and His kingdom. The world hates it, tries to mock it, to hide it, to ignore it, and it still is there. And there is none like Him. He is still the maker of heaven and earth. He is still the one who delivered His people from Pharaoh. He is still the one who destroyed the armies of Sennacherib in a night. He is still the one whose birth was announced by the angel host. These, and so many more, will endure forever.

But what about you, what about your legacy? Are you a member of Jesus Christ? Then your name too lives forever, because you bear THE name. The name that you were given in your Baptism, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And I look around, and I see my legacy, my children who bear that same name. So, take comfort, brothers and sisters, for the name of Jesus will endure, Amen.

Psalm 136:1 **Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.**

This Psalm is filled with a tremendous amount of comfort. Some people dislike the repetitive nature of the refrain, but that's where the comfort in this Psalm comes. First, let's talk about mercy, or steadfast love, or loving-kindness, or whichever translation you use. This is that much talked about Hebrew word **חסד** (*chesed*), that covenantal love between God and His people. A love that is more than just the English word love, which most use to mean lust these days. It is a selfless love, a sacrificial love, an unconditional love and so much more. It is mercy, it is kindness, it is loving.

And this Psalm tells us one thing repeatedly, God has not fallen out of love with His creation. So many of us, if we had been treated as God has been treated by His creation would have abandoned it and started over somewhere else. But God didn't. Not only did He stay but He came into His creation and fixed it. He died for it because He loved it so much.

This Psalm tells us that whatever has happened, that God's mercy, His steadfast love remains. When Adam and Eve thought that they should know better and be like God, what happened? God's *chesed* endured, and He shed blood and clothed them. When Israel came to the Red Sea and cursed at God for wanting to kill them in the wilderness, what happened? God's *chesed* endured, and He parted the waters of the Red Sea and delivered His people. When the armies of the inhabitants of the promised land stood against God's people and they despaired, what happened? God's *chesed* endured, and He gave these armies and kings into the hands of His people. And we could keep building this Psalm out forever. When the Pope tried to hide the word of God from the people, what happened? God's *chesed* endured, and he sent His servants to translate the Bible at the risk of death into the language of the people. When the government and church leadership told us to close our congregations, what happened? God's *chesed* endured, and He sent bold preachers to denounce that evil. So no matter what will happen yet, God's mercy will endure! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 123:2 **Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes *look* to the Lord our God, Until He has mercy on us.**

In various sports coaches are keen to tell the defenders what to watch for. In basketball, you should not be keeping your eye on the ball but rather on the player controlling the ball—his body will tell you what he will do with the ball. In baseball and tennis on the other hand, you must keep your eye on the ball; once it has left the pitcher's hand or the racket, nothing other than wind (or the bounce from the court) can affect its trajectory.

The Psalmist bids us to keep our eyes focused on God like the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters. Master or mistresses often need their servants to help with their activities, whether it is official business or something as simple as putting on clothes. The best servants know how their masters or mistresses ask for things without using words.

What might it look like for us to have our eyes focused on God so that we would do those good works that he has prepared beforehand, that we might walk in them (Eph 2:10)? What might it look like for us to lift up our eyes to God in the heavens to understand his mercy and grace for us when we fail? For even when servants do not do all they ought for their masters, the gracious hand of the master does not fall heavy upon them, but lifts them up and restores them. So too does God do for us, and He directs our eyes again and again to His mercy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 122:1 I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the LORD.”

I’m sure every Sunday morning, when you wake up, you recite this Psalm, right? Even on those cold, dark, snowy mornings when you’re still exhausted from working late the night before, and your significant other nudges you to get up for church, you leap out of bed with a joyful proclamation, “I’m so glad I get to go to church today!” Well, you’re probably sitting there with a wry smile, knowing it’s never quite that simple. Even if you haven’t missed a church service in the last 15 years, there are days when expressing that joy feels like a challenge. It’s your sinful human nature trying to pull you away from the blessings of Jesus Christ.

Why would anyone be happy about going to a place where judgment is pronounced, especially when you know you’re guilty? We’re all aware of our own sins before God, just like David, the author of this Psalm, who had his own share of wrongdoing with Bathsheba and Uriah. Yet, here he is, declaring his gladness at the prospect of entering the house of Jesus Christ.

That’s because the house of Jesus Christ is where true salvation is found. It’s where genuine forgiveness is offered, where the bread of life sustains all who seek it. Your sinful nature may try to keep you away from that house, instilling fear and hatred towards it. But the Holy Spirit gently calls you, urging, “Let us go into the house of Jesus Christ.”

So, this Lenten season, let’s all rejoice and teach others—the children, friends, neighbors, and loved ones—about the joy of entering the house of Jesus Christ. In His name, Amen.

John 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!”

Little kids absolutely love superheroes. They love seeing their favorite character displaying their mighty power in the service to the city/people that they’ve sworn to protect. Sure, sometimes the heroes get hurt, but they always get back up and are back in the fray. Heroes never suffer from arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome or scoliosis. They heal fast and fight hard. It’s easier to believe that of those masked superheroes. You can’t see their faces or read their expressions. You can’t tell when they’re sad, or scared, or hurt, or tired, until they take that mask off. And then you see their humanity.

In many ways, this Word of Jesus from the cross is that. Jesus has done the heroic today, He has forgiven those who are torturing Him, He has promised salvation to the thief next to Him, He has made provisions for His mother, He has recited the Scripture for those who should know it yet do not. And now, a reminder that while He is the God who created the heavens and the earth, He is still a man born of the virgin Mary. And after all of this, all of this abuse and torture, He is thirsty. And sure, we can spin this into all sorts of spiritual directions, but not today. Today, we’re going to look straight at that cross, look at the broken body of our savior, hanging for us there on the cross. We’re going to look at the pain and the suffering that He is enduring for our salvation, and we’re going to hear Him ask for a drink, a small piece of comfort in the midst of His suffering. And even this is marred by brokenness. For He isn’t given a cool glass of water, He isn’t given a crisp beer or a mellow wine. He is given old, spoiled, wine. My sin caused this. Your sin caused this. Forgive us, Lord, and give us a thirst for Your Word which never spoils. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion.

God's absence is our problem. The exile is a crisis of God not being here... or rather, of us not being there. For it is in Zion that Jesus Christ had promised to dwell, to be in our midst (Exod 15:17; Lev 26:11-12; Ps 2:6). But now? The Psalmist laments dwelling in Babylon, apart from the house of Jesus Christ, apart from His Throne, apart from His Old Testament Word and Sacraments.

He cries to God that You have placed us here, in Babylon, to punish us for our sins and our fathers' sins. Yet here, our captors demand we use Your songs, O Jesus Christ, to be their entertainment. Amused by Asaph's praise. Tickled at David's contrition after the affair with Bathsheba. Playing drinking games while Your prophets chant.

In this foreign land, among these foreign people, the memories begin to face. The months become years, which in turn become decades. How long, O Christ? You told us to dwell in this land, to marry and raise families, to support the good of the city (Jer 29). But will my children still remember? Will they even care? Will even I forget Your Promise, Your House, and Your Testimony? May it never be!

Recall our Enemy—our brothers in Edom and their satanic glee as Babylon surrounded us! They betrayed us, left us for dead, doing nothing to protect the city of King Jesus. Remember their sins, O Lord! Bring judgment, O Christ! Destroy their seed, O Lord! Put an end to all this evil, once and for all. Destroy even the offspring of the Evil One, so that Satan and His minions may have no foothold. Deliver us from evil—completely!

Bring us too back, O Jesus. Do not remove us from that which sustains our faith unto eternity. Be our King and dwell with us forever. Amen.

Psalm 121:4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

How often do we find ourselves caught off guard in our spiritual journey? We encounter unexpected challenges, strong temptations, or spiritual attacks, leaving us feeling vulnerable and unprepared. Satan, with his intricate understanding of human nature gained over millennia, proves to be a cunning adversary in spiritual warfare. In such moments of struggle and uncertainty, this Psalm offers profound solace.

It begins with the poignant question, "I lift my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from?" Many of us can relate to this sense of overwhelm, grappling to stand firm in the face of adversity, knowing that victory cannot be achieved through our own strength alone. It's then that we realize we need assistance, aid from a higher power. And there, ready to come to our aid, is Jesus Christ, God's champion.

With Jesus by our side, we are not alone. He stands firm, ensuring our footing remains steady, thwarting the advances of the enemy. Even in moments when it may seem like defeat is imminent, Jesus turns the tide, transforming apparent setbacks into triumphs.

But what if we feel distant from Jesus during times of attack? What if it seems He is absent or unaware? Rest assured, our Lord does not sleep nor slumber; there are no surprises that catch Him off guard. Despite Satan's attempts to undermine Him, Jesus emerged victorious even in His darkest hour on the cross, defeating sin, death, and the devil through His sacrifice. And now, risen from the dead, He remains vigilant, guarding and protecting His people now and for all eternity.

Praise be to Jesus, our ever-watchful guardian and protector. In His name, Amen.

February 27 – Psalm 120

Psalm 120:5 Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, That I Dwell among the tents of Kedar!

“A song of ascents.” This superscription, found in the Hebrew and Greek editions of this collection of Psalms, 120 to 134, is hotly debated by scholars and theologians. The best argument is that they are pilgrim songs, perhaps for the three annual pilgrimages to the Temple, eventually used by the exiles returning from Babylon.

Whatever the original use, however, we can see that the author, the Psalmist that is, and The Author, the Holy Spirit, have given us a prayer book for our journey—the Way of Jesus Christ which goes to Zion, that Holy Kingdom which will have no end.

When we pray this rich Psalm, we cry out against those who speak lies and falsehoods against Christ and His Church. Their words pierce the Christian’s heart like arrows, the shameful speech sears our conscience and makes our skin blister, like hot coals.

Who speaks these words? Those of Meshech, a clan of Japhethites, and those of Kedar, a tribe of Ishmaelites. In other words: unbelievers and revilers of the One True God. The Psalmist is sick of living among them. He is exhausted with working a 9–5 day at an office, sitting between the man who can’t stop using our Lord’s name as an expletive and the gal who can’t stop talking about how empowering her latest abortion was.

Deliver me, O LORD Jesus Christ, from those around me who revel in their sin and unbelief. Vindicate me on that Last Day from all slander and lies, and especially my own lying tongue, so that I may dwell with You in your kingdom which has no end. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

March 19 – Psalm 140

Psalm 140:4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; Preserve me from violent men, Who have purposed to make my steps stumble.

Throughout David’s life, he frequently found himself fleeing from the clutches of wicked adversaries. In his early years, he evaded the murderous pursuit of Saul, and later, he faced the treacherous schemes of his son, Absalom, who coveted his father’s throne. David’s time in Philistia added yet another chapter to his saga of peril. Despite the relentless threats against him, David found unwavering support in an ally they could never overcome: Jesus Christ. He consistently called upon the Lord for deliverance, and God faithfully rescued him from his enemies time and again. However, David was not immune to the grasp of the ultimate adversary: Satan. Despite succumbing to temptation, God’s mercy prevailed as He sent the prophet Nathan to lead David to repentance and salvation.

This Psalm serves as a powerful prayer against our adversaries, particularly those who seek to obstruct and distort the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a fervent plea directed at Satan, the father of all lies and the ultimate enemy of mankind. We pray for his downfall, for justice to be served, and for the promised day of reckoning when Jesus Christ’s victory will be fully realized. Until then, we seek Jesus Christ’s protection amidst the trials brought by our enemies, trusting in His righteousness to secure our eternal communion with God. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 141:4 **Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice wicked works With men who work iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.**

Reflecting on Psalm 141, I couldn't help but draw parallels to Daniel and the three young men from Judah. Picture them seated at King Nebuchadnezzar's lavish table, surrounded by Babylon's elite, feasting and celebrating the empire's success. Amidst the revelry and praise for pagan gods, Daniel and his companions made a bold choice. Instead of joining in the indulgence, they opted for a diet that seemed inadequate, yet they found their strength in God.

It's time for us to adopt the mindset and actions of Daniel and his friends. We must acknowledge that we are living as exiles in this world, recognizing that our true kingdom is not of this world, regardless of whether we reside in a nation claiming Christianity. Satan is not playing games lightly; he is fiercely determined to ensnare every child of God. His tactics are subtle, aiming to lead our hearts astray towards any form of evil, seeking to sever our connection with God.

Navigating this exile, we may encounter situations where discerning the path of righteousness is challenging. For instance, imagine being invited over for coffee and dessert by a seemingly friendly couple in town, only to discover their beliefs that marriage is a flawed institution and actively advocate for divorce, seeing it as a means of empowerment. Such scenarios are not far-fetched anomalies but rather commonplace in today's world.

Yet, amidst the snares laid by Satan, we find assurance in the supremacy of our God. His kingdom stands firm while the kingdoms of this world fade away. Our primary concern should not be environmental pollution but rather the pollution of our prayers. Let us fill the air around us with fervent prayers to our heavenly Father, trusting that He will deliver us from this transient kingdom into His glorious realm. May Jesus Christ guard and protect us within His kingdom. Amen.

Psalm 118:22 **The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.**

If you like numbers and how the chapters of the Bible fit together, Psalm 117 is the middle chapter of the Bible—and the shortest, only two verses long. It is rather fitting, calling upon the Gentiles of all people to praise the Lord. Beginning with the Magi on Epiphany and continuing through the ministry of St. Paul, they would do just that, proclaiming themselves that truth of eternity is not found in pagan philosophy but rather “the truth of the Lord *endures* forever” (Ps 117:2).

Psalm 118 is another great Psalm—and it is reportedly Martin Luther's favorite—“my own beloved psalm,” as he put it. It is the psalm of a believer who calls on the Lord in the midst of distress and relies on him throughout the trials of the enemy. There are many iconic verses from this psalm, many of which we continue to use in our liturgy and hymns: “The Lord *is* my strength and song, And He has become my salvation” (v 14); “This *is* the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it” (v 24); and “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for *He is* good! For His mercy *endures* forever” (v 29). Furthermore, there are two verses that foreshadow Jesus's life: Jesus himself cites “The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone” (v 22; Matt 21:42), and “Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (v 26) is spoken by the crowds as he enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. May this psalm bless your Lenten devotions; consider meditating and memorizing it as you prepare to echo these verses in your worship. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Luke 23:43 **And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”**

It’s truly tragic how some use the example of the thief on the cross as an excuse for wrongdoing. I’ve heard it too often: “I don’t need to attend church, take communion, or undergo baptism. It doesn’t matter how I live because the thief on the cross was saved.” May God protect us from such misguided thoughts! This encounter is among the most profoundly moving passages in the Bible.

The crucifixion scene is a stumbling block for many. Witness how the crowds insulted and mocked Jesus! “If you are the Christ, save yourself and us,” they jeered. Yet, amid the mockery, only the penitent thief confessed Jesus. Despite seeing Jesus’ wounds, the crown of thorns, and His suffering, nailed to the cross and pleading with the Father for mercy, the thief expresses faith: “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” This penitent criminal acknowledges Jesus as a King even in His crucifixion.

Then comes the most astounding promise: “Today you will be with Me in Paradise.” These words don’t merely emanate from a dying man on a cross but from the throne of divine authority! In the beginning, paradise was closed off when Adam reached for the forbidden fruit and became a thief. Now, the second Adam extends His arm, suffering for the guilty thieves, and opens the way to paradise. To us, He declares: “Today you will be with Me in the garden of delights!” No longer will you be cast out; the flaming sword will no longer block your path. Here, in your midst, the tree of life is restored. The cross of Christ serves as the key to blessed paradise, unlocking the door for us all.

Psalm 142:6 **Attend to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are stronger than I.**

Humility isn’t a prominent trait among Americans in general, and regrettably, it’s often lacking among American Christians as well. Many are hesitant to acknowledge their own poverty of spirit, their sinful nature. Yet, this harsh reality is something even David, a man described as being after God’s own heart, could admit, as evidenced in this Psalm. David, renowned for slaying giants and leading Israel’s armies with strength and valor, authored this Psalm. Despite his mighty deeds, he openly confessed his powerlessness in the face of his persecutors, acknowledging their superiority.

David’s insight holds true, for his adversaries were not merely mortal men. If they were, the conflict would be simpler—good versus evil in a straightforward battle. However, our adversary is likened to a prowling lion, a fearsome dragon, a serpent of the sea—none other than Satan himself. He wields formidable power beyond our own.

Yet, this is part of God’s divine plan. As stated in 1 Corinthians 1:27, God chooses the foolish and weak to confound the wise and mighty. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, Jesus affirms that His strength is made perfect in weakness. God’s method of salvation through the seemingly weak act of Jesus’ death on the cross demonstrates His power. Through His death, Jesus conquers eternal death, overpowering even Satan himself. He is our refuge, our God, our mighty champion. Just as He delivered David, He will deliver you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 143:3 Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; My heart within me is distressed.

The current state of affairs is undeniably challenging. From concerns about inflation and unemployment to worries about the stability of the stock market and the value of the dollar, coupled with fears of potential unrest surrounding upcoming elections, the outlook appears bleak. And that's just scratching the surface of the issues impacting our lives. Close to home, personal struggles may weigh heavily—be it the illness or loss of a loved one, doubts about faith, job insecurity, or the looming threat of homelessness.

In times like these, it's natural to empathize with David, who faced his own tumultuous trials. Perhaps he penned this Psalm while fleeing from Absalom's rebellion, a time marked by familial betrayal and political upheaval. It's understandable that David's spirit would falter, his heart weighed down by distress.

Yet, despite the overwhelming challenges, David—and by extension, we—are not left to navigate these storms alone. Jesus assured His disciples of this truth on the eve of His crucifixion, promising to send the Holy Spirit as a constant companion and guide. Through baptism, we have received this Holy Spirit, a divine presence that sustains us amidst life's trials.

Our faith teaches us that we are not abandoned to the whims of fate. Instead, we serve a God who intimately engages with His creation, even to the point of taking on human form and enduring the agony of death. And even in the face of rejection and betrayal, God remains steadfast, sending the Holy Spirit to comfort and strengthen us until the day of ultimate renewal.

Yes, the road ahead may be rough, but we find solace in knowing that our God holds the world in His hands. Let us remain steadfast, O Holy Spirit, until the end. Amen.

Psalm 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His saints.

Picture this scene: A righteous prince of Israel responds to his king's call, leading his men into battle. The battlefield is perilous, and soon they find themselves locked in a fierce struggle for survival against the enemy. With every ounce of strength and courage, they fight to protect their lives and return to their loved ones. Despite their valor, the prince watches helplessly as his comrades fall one by one until he stands alone, the sole survivor of his once-mighty band.

In his moment of desperation, the prince cries out to the Lord for deliverance, and Jesus Christ answers. Through a hail of arrows and the timely intervention of fellow Israelites, he is rescued from certain doom, and the battle draws to a close. Grateful for his salvation, the prince reflects on his experience and expresses his gratitude in the form of a Psalm, acknowledging Jesus as the source of his deliverance while honoring the memory of his fallen comrades.

Much like this fictional prince, we find ourselves in the midst of a spiritual battle against the forces of evil led by Satan. Their aim is not merely our physical demise but the destruction of our hope and faith. Yet, amidst the darkness and death, there shines a beacon of life, hope, and salvation. Jesus Christ has conquered eternal death, offering us victory even in the face of physical demise. Through His death and resurrection, we are assured of eternal life, and even in death, we emerge triumphant.

Each of us holds immeasurable value, for we have been redeemed from eternal death by the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. As we journey through life, let us remember that death holds no power over us, for in Christ, we find eternal victory. With hearts filled with gratitude and praise, may we enter into His presence, praising Him for all eternity. In the victorious name of Jesus, Amen.

Psalm 115:1 **Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth.**

This song was the great anthem of the Knights Templar. They used the first verse as the motto of their warrior-monk order. I can imagine that the Knights and sergeants attached to this order must have prayed this song on their way to battle their Muslim contenders regularly. The opening verses take the pagan mocking of God and turn it around upon the mockers and their false idols—for not only is their idolatry misplaced faith, but it is also damned foolishness, for they reject the living God for inanimate statues.

The psalmist then turns and gives an encouraging militant exhortation to the whole Church: the people, their clergy, and even those proselytes who are still discerning the faith to become members.

The Revised Psalter employs a remarkable word to translate עֲזָרָה in verses 9ff: ‘succor’, a 12th-Century, Anglo-French word from the Latin, ‘succurrere’. It means ‘help’ or ‘aid,’ which is how the Hebrew is usually translated in most English versions of the Psalms, but ‘succor’ brings with it an underlying current of urgency; its full meaning is “running-help,” or “hastened-aid.”

The reason we praise God as we do throughout the Psalm is because he runs/hastens to defend His people when we are pressed by our enemies, both seen and unseen.

Psalm 144:6 **Flash forth lightning and scatter them; Shoot out Your arrows and destroy them.**

Have you ever prayed like this? Have you prayed that God would send an act of nature to destroy someone who is angering you? Someone whose mouth is filled with lies and their “friendliness” is a complete and total act. I admit, that my mind often comes up with inventive ways that such a person is taken from this life, many of which are likely a result of the poison of this age that is television. I’m reminded of saints John and James who came up to Jesus when a Samaritan village rejected Jesus because He was on the way to Jerusalem. Luke 9:54 says, “**And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’**” But Jesus didn’t call down fire, nor did he allow James and John to do so. Elijah had called down fire, it was upon unbelieving soldiers of an unbelieving king who sought to kill God’s prophet (2 Kings 1).

So why, why doesn’t God send down fire, send down lightning, and destroy His enemies, enemies of the Gospel. After all, God’s enemies are doing much worse than just killing people, they are dragging them into an eternity of hellfire. So why? Why don’t we see more thunder and lightning, or fire and brimstone? Because, God doesn’t just kill His enemies, He redeems them. Remember, there was a time when you were an enemy of God. That you were born a rebel, a traitor, one who hated God. But then you died, were drowned in the waters of your baptism, and were born again. David asks what is man that God is mindful of him? It’s because God chose man, purely out of His own compassion. And so God became man, and died to redeem Him. Instead of striking me dead with lightning, He has redeemed me, washed me in His blood, and planted me in a garden, where my children now grow in the fear and love of Jesus Christ. **Happy are the people who are in such a state; Happy are the people whose God is the LORD! Amen.**

John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

“τετέλεσται” has to be the most beautiful single word that Jesus speaks. This word, translated as “It is finished,” is so simple, yet so complex. What is finished? Who finished it? For what purpose is it finished? And those are just the questions that can be considered from the English translation. This word means finished as in brought to completion, fully mature, made perfect. And then there is the grammatical aspects, that this word is in the perfect tense, not just simple present or simple past tense.

So, let’s start unpacking this word, and what Jesus is telling us from the cross. So, what is finished? Is Jesus just saying that He’s done, He can’t take any more of this pain and suffering, so He’s giving up and dying? No, what He’s saying is that the plan that was put in place before the foundation of the world, the plan that God had been working toward since He said, “Let there be light!” was complete. All of that planning, of shepherding, of guarding Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of the hints and promises were now complete. Now the work of salvation is done, brought to its full maturity, with Jesus’ suffering and death upon the cross. Thousands of years of work is finally done, creation has been redeemed. And it’s going to stay that way. It’s not just redeemed for a little time until it breaks again, no, it’s going to be redeemed forever.

Even though it doesn’t look like it, this is a declaration of victory. This is the conquering Hero crying out in triumph! One last charge, to break the hold of Satan and His minions, to set free the captives, and to restore creation. Τετέλεσται! Amen.

Psalm 114:7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the God of Jacob.

I am not sure that I ever want to see the mountains “skip like rams” or the little hills skip “like lambs” (Ps 114:4). I have felt earthquakes—none strong enough to do any damage—but the idea that an earthquake would be strong enough to make mountains jump into the air is frankly scary. Nonetheless, this is one of the ways that the Psalmist describes the almighty power of God during the Exodus, especially as they gathered around the smoking mountain of Mount Sinai. There are several mighty acts that he cites in addition to the glorious presence of God on Mount Sinai. He cites the Jordan river turning back and fleeing as the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant touch it. He describes the flinty rock turning into a fountain of water as Moses strikes the rock. All of these are evidence of God’s power. They were then, and they would be today if God would show such miracles to us now.

There is one more evidence of God’s power, and that is in verse 1: “Israel went out of Egypt.” What use is God’s almighty power if He does not use it for you, His people? He brought out His people by displaying multiple almighty signs, destroying the host of Pharaoh in the process. He fed them in the wilderness and brought them to the Promised Land. Although His acts today are not as glorious to our eyes, they are nonetheless mighty. Jesus unites His Body and Blood to mere bread and wine. He forgives your sins by Word and water and claims you for His own. Mightier than the mountain skipping like a ram? Most definitely. Perhaps In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 113:9 He grants the barren woman a home, Like a joyful mother of children. Praise the LORD!

Psalm 113 is a psalm of praise, with one of its verses part of the versicles that we use in the Service of Prayer and Preaching. But why is Jesus Christ worthy of praise? What is it that sets Him above all other gods? Well, the fact that He exists and those other gods don't is one thing. The fact that He made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything that dwells in them. But that isn't the reason that the Psalmist has declared that God is to be praised. No, the reason that He is to be praised is because he humbles Himself, and remembers the poor, and cares for the barren.

When I read this verse, I was immediately reminded of the story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She cried out to God that she might be one of the many barren women that He healed, and her prayer was heard. She became the mother of Samuel, and then many more sons and daughters. These are not the mighty acts that the world would consider great, but to Hannah, there was nothing greater than God granting her children, and making her a mother.

And this is how Jesus Christ is great, and this is why He is worthy of praise, because He cares for His creation. He cares for those that are deemed "worthless" by society, including the poor and the barren. And not only does He care for them, but He came down from heaven and lived with them, He suffered for them, and He died on the cross for them. This means that He still does the same for you. And you, oh barren woman and childless man in this life, He has not forgotten you. He has heard your prayers and will answer in His time. Praise be to our God! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 145:4 One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts.

These verses reveal a fatal flaw in modern American Christianity. You might be curious about what exactly I mean, so ponder this with me. Can you remember back to your childhood, how often did your mother or your father teach you about the mighty works of God? And no, it doesn't count if your mom was the Sunday School teacher. Because Sunday School is a symptom of the problem. We think that we can just farm out the education of our kids to various sources, and we don't have to bother with any of it beyond the quarterly parent teacher conferences that everyone generally dislikes. Otherwise, we can just get them up, send them to school, tell them to do their homework when they get home, and we're done with education, as far as we're concerned. And this attitude has absolutely infected the church. We expect that children will be taught everything they need to know about the bible in Sunday School, and then confirmation, so we as parents don't have to lift a finger to pass on the faith. After all, that's what our parents did for us, right? And we turned out alright, didn't we? Look at our world, look at our churches, something isn't right, and this is one of things that's not right.

If God is truly as important as we claim Him to be, why wouldn't we be talking about Him with our kids? Why do we spend more time bonding over sports scores and shopping trips than about the contest between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness, or Jesus' blood that is more precious than gold or silver? We gladly talk about the trivial things but choke about talking about the things that really matter. So let us repent. **The LORD upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down (14).** Let us talk to our kids about the things that matter, let us praise God's mighty works to the coming generations, and let us pass on the one thing that truly matters, our faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 146:3–4 **Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish.**

This Psalm and Psalm 2 have been such a comfort these last years. The media likes to pretend that whoever we elect as president will either be the savior or the newest incarnation of a certain German leader in WWII. And it's the same story on the "left" or the "right"—you just have to switch the names. But no matter who is on the ballot come November, they will not be the savior. That is the title for Jesus Christ alone. Whoever is elected will also be used by Jesus Christ to accomplish His will. God has used pagan rulers before to accomplish His will and will continue to do so until He comes again and assumes the throne that is rightfully His. God used both Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. One destroyed the temple and took God's people into exile, the other returned God's people and provided them with the resources to rebuild the temple. Both were God's will.

Both kings died, and both of their empires fell. Not even the mighty Roman empire has survived. The only kingdom to endure is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. His plans are eternal and cannot perish. His plan was to die on the cross so that you could live in His kingdom forever. So put your trust in Him, Jesus Christ. For Jesus is not just the son of some man, but rather He is the Son of Man, who is seated on high, and will come again in power, just as He declared. The powers of this world will rage against that, will plot against that, act against that, and will fail. They think to win by persecuting Jesus' church, and yet it will grow all the more. For our God reigns forever, and all will answer to Him. Beware, O princes of man, for **The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked He turns upside down. The LORD shall reign forever—Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD! (9-10)**

Psalm 112:7 **He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.**

If there's one thing that's absolutely not in short supply right now, it's evil tidings. Fighting in Ukraine, fighting in Palestine, wickedness being "blessed" by the Roman church, Christians murdered for their faith, rising inflation, and the list goes on and on. And the media declares after every single pronouncement that the sky is falling, because they need the fear. Fear drives the clicks and the advertising dollars. If the media had their way, they would want you afraid for most of the day, for that is the way you stay tuned and listen to their instructions.

But that is not the way of the righteous man. This Psalm tells us much about this righteous man, but most importantly that the righteous man has no fear of evil tidings. But why, why is there no room for this man to fear evil tidings? Because of what the Psalmist already told us in verse 1, **"Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who delights greatly in His commandments."** The righteous man doesn't fear evil tidings because his fear is for the Lord. For what power do evil tidings have that could ever compare to the power of Jesus Christ? Satan tells you that if you don't start fearing these evil tidings you will lose your house. Jesus says, **"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"** (Matt 6:26). Satan says that everyone will desert, but Jesus says, **"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life"** (Matt 19:29). So as Satan seeks to cause you to fear, take a lesson from Jesus, the one who fulfills the role of the righteous man in this Psalm. Put your trust in God and His good tidings of Jesus' death for you, and no evil tidings will have any power over you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 111:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*. His praise endures forever.

The interplay between the Psalms and Proverbs is interesting. After all, Solomon wrote most of the Proverbs, and his father wrote many of the Psalms. After all, a saying of David, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps 14:1; 53:1) is not explicitly cited in Proverbs, but you would be blind to ignore how Solomon develops this theme in Proverbs. It is also possible that the opposite happened: later Psalmists possibly riffed from the Proverbs and praised God for His Wisdom. We do not know the author of Psalm 111, but he (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) has found insight from the Proverbs.

Just as we can learn right action from the Proverbs, we ought to also praise God for this guidance, just as we would praise Him for His creation and redemption. This Psalm of praise includes all of it: praise for the works of God’s hands (v 7) and praise for His redemption (v 9). After all, Jesus Himself is the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 who was with the Father at the creation, bringing everything into existence. Understanding the Wisdom of God is understanding Jesus and His way for our life. “His praise endures forever!” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 147:3–4 [The LORD] heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.

Have you ever ventured into the countryside and gazed up at the night sky? It’s a breathtaking sight, adorned with countless twinkling stars. Each time I look up at the stars, I’m reminded of God’s promise to Abraham—that his descendants would multiply like the stars in the sky (Genesis 15). As I grow older, I recall learning that some of the stars we see are actually long gone, yet their light continues to reach us. Despite their vast number, God knows each star by name, demonstrating His intimate care for them.

If God knows and cares for the stars, how much more does He know and care for each of us? Jesus, who didn’t die for the stars but for humanity, knows you personally. He knows your name and calls you to Himself. He beckons you to come out of whatever scattered places you may find yourself in and hear His life-giving Word—a Word that has the power to raise the dead.

Just as “He declares His Word to Jacob and His statutes and His judgments to Israel,” Jesus builds up His new Israel, gathering His people from all nations and making them His own. He knows every detail about you, and His love for you is unwavering.

So, while it’s wonderful to admire the stars, don’t envy them. Instead, embrace the profound truth that Jesus loves you deeply and sacrificed Himself for you. And one day, we will behold Him shining in His full glory. Until then, Amen.

Psalm 148:1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights!

“Praise the Lord!” declares the Psalmist. Truly the Lord is to be praised, for all His mighty deeds, for all the times He has delivered His people from the hands of their enemies. He alone is God, and He created and sustained His creation.

Praise Him, all heavens above. Praise Him, all the earth below. Praise Him, all who carry a pitcher of water. Praise Him, all who sit with Him at table. Praise Him, all whose feet are washed by Him. Praise Him all ye unleavened bread! Praise Him all ye fruit of the vine! Praise Him for you will be His vessel this very night, and on every Lord’s Day hereafter. Praise Him you two swords gathered together. Praise Him you drops of bloody sweat. Praise Him all ye sleeping disciples. Praise Him all ye rowdy mobs. Praise Him, you who would betray the Son of Man with a kiss. Praise Him all ye wicked councils and crooked judges.

It sounds jarring, doesn’t it? Yet, even by these things Jesus Christ will be praised. For those events of Holy Thursday are for the glory of God. For Christ is glorified when He is lifted high, for everyone to see. And He is lifted upon the cross on Friday. And from that cross will come the greatest glory, the greatest victory of all time. So, praise Him, even when it looks dire. Praise Him, even when suffering is ahead. Praise the Lord, for His salvation is near. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Luke 23:34 Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots.

Jesus’ first word from the cross isn’t a word of condemnation, even though He had warned the women of Jerusalem that destruction was coming. No, Jesus reveals Himself quite clearly in His speaking from the cross. Instead of cursing those who drove the nails through his flesh, He forgives. Have you ever thought about how hard that would be to forgive those men on that day? He’s already endured brutal torture, including several beatings, being spit upon, mocked, flayed by the whipping that He received, and now His bruised, battered, bloody, and torn body is being nailed to the cross. I don’t think I’d have the strength, the grace, the mercy, the love to be able to ask God to forgive someone who did that to me. But Jesus does.

And this is good news for us. Why? Because it shows the depth of His mercy. Even those who are literally killing Him, Jesus wants to save them. Remember, forgiveness is never without bloodshed. And here, Jesus is literally shedding His blood as it runs down the stripes left by the whip, as it runs over His brow from the crown of thorns. He declares that this blood, His very life, is poured out even for those who are inflicting this pain, this torture, this death. Which means that, yes, it is poured out for you and me too. My sins led Jesus to the cross. My sins caused Him to be nailed to the tree. My sins needed payment, needed forgiveness, needed bloodshed. As do yours. And Jesus willingly shed His blood for you, for me, for the man who drove the nails through Jesus’ hands and feet. No mere man could have this much love, this much mercy, this much grace. But our God does. Remember that as we walk together this Lenten season. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Psalm 110:4 **The LORD has sworn And will not relent, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”**

This Psalm challenges a unitarian view of God. Both the Eternal Father and Son are here confessed—two persons of the Holy Trinity. The Father (“The LORD”) tells the Son (“my Lord”) what the office of Christ entails, and we get to listen in.

The Christ is the King! As a King, He reigns in the midst of His enemies, bringing all the enemies of Zion under His feet. In this we see a remix of Psalm 2, where the Christ smashes the wicked with a rod. He will bring the kings of the nations to destruction. His people freely go out in His army: the Church Militant going forth to all nations, destroying every stronghold of the Evil One.

The Christ is also the High Priest. During the Mosaic Covenant, these were distinct offices. The High Priest was to be from the line of Aaron, a member of the tribe of Levi. The office of King was connected to the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10), specifically the sons of David. This Psalm reaches back further than the giving of the Law on Sinai, however, to Genesis 14, where the enigmatic figure of Melchizedek appears, the priest-king of Salem.

After wicked kings have been destroyed and judged, Melchizedek (“king of righteousness”) appears, prays to God, and distributes bread and wine, and then receives a tithe of the spoils of the battle. In the same way, the Christ is both Priest and King. The New Testament authors appeal to Melchizedek for the precedent of having Jesus fill both offices.

Both these offices He exercises for you: He rules over you, providing for you as a King ought. He also stands as your High Priest, interceding for you, having offered up His own body upon the cross to atone for your sins forever.

Psalm 149:6 – 7 **Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples.**

Psalm 137 presents a context where Christian exiles are being marched off by their captors to Babel (i.e. Babylon). And one of the verses notes how the captors, no doubt in a condescending way, ask the exiles to sing them one of their songs of joy.

The first Psalm on my list would be Psalm 149. It starts innocently enough with God’s people proclaiming the glory of God their King. Yet just after the halfway point this song of the church takes a great swerve and turns from a song glorifying the great Providence of God and becomes an “Oh yeah, we are going to win!” stadium-thumper.

Then, when paired with the imagery of Psalm 110, in particular the translation of verse 3 in The Revised Psalter, which speaks of Jesus being surrounded by the sanctified priest-princes of the church in their glorious blood-washed Christ-mantles: those who would be the oppressors of God’s people have good reason to be terrified at their mocking music request. May they repent in the spirit of Psalm 2 (“**Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him**”).

May truth of 1 Corinthians 3:16f sober their hardened hearts (“**Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise**”), that they may join the winning side.

Psalm 150:2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

Jesus Christ has done so many excellent and mighty things. And I'm not talking about just the acts that happened during his 33 years before His crucifixion. He created the world, not with a hammer and tongs, not with nails and screws, not with a paintbrush, not by wrestling with it and shaping it with His bare hands, but simply by speaking. God said, and it happened. And then there was the flood and the confusing of the languages at Babel, both mighty works. God destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, sending the plagues on Egypt, parting the Red Sea, tearing down the walls of Jericho, scattering the armies of Midian, bowing down the statue of Dagon, destroying the army of Sennacherib, shutting up the mouths of the lions, and it goes on and on.

But today, Holy Saturday, He rests from His greatest act, the act of redemption. Tomorrow Christ will rise from the dead, and His praise will echo throughout time. He is most worthy of praise. For He could have simply seen that what He created as very good had been corrupted, and just destroyed it and started over again. It would have been far easier, far quicker, and far less painful. But Jesus Christ did not choose the quick and easy path, He chose the path that would lead Him to the cross. Why? Because even though we were not born yet, He loved us. He did what was difficult and painful because we were worth it. So, let us not turn our back on the cross, for that is His greatest and mightiest act. That is His place of victory. Look upon your savior, there on the cross, and do not turn away. See the might that it took to suffer. See the power that He used to carry all of our sins on His shoulders. And now, praise Him with all that you have, for He is mighty, and full of mercy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 109:8 Let his days be few, *And* let another take his office.

The imprecatory psalms are often hard for modern Christians to hear; we just don't talk that way any more. Nor do we see the consequences of these psalms. After all, even if we may pray them against our enemies or against Satan the accuser, we may need to wait until the Last Day to see the consequences of the attacks against God's saints. There is one instance, though, where an imprecatory psalm is cited. After Judas hangs himself, the remaining eleven disciples see the need to bring their number back up to twelve. They interpret this psalm as applying to Judas. Read it; the words of David against false accusers could have been said by Jesus as applied to Judas.

Every curse of this psalm also applies to Judas, especially his *office* of disciple and apostle. He has forfeited it by his treachery and suicide. Thus his office must be given to another, "Let his days be few, *And* let another take his office" (Ps 109:7). As it had been written, so it was done. They cast lots, and Matthias replaced Judas in his office.

Do not be disheartened when you pray an imprecatory psalm and do not see its fulfillment. God sees your cause. He saves you according to His mercy. Those who do not repent of their evil will receive their due reward. But you can praise God, "For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, To save *him* from those who condemn him" (Ps 109:30–31).

Psalm 108:12-13 Give us help from trouble, For the help of man is useless. Through God we will do valiantly, For it is He who shall tread down our enemies.

Psalm 108 is a combination of the most joyful parts from two of King David's other psalms, 57 and 60. Psalm 57 was prayed when David fled from King Saul and hid in the cave. Psalm 60 was prayed when David's armies were battling the Arameans and Edomites. When David is hiding in the dark recesses of a cave from ruthless enemies, his soul cries out: "I will sing and give praise! Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn!" Through the bitter darkness he anticipates the dawning of a new day which the Lord shall bring him to see. Though this cave may very well be his grave, he lifts up his soul and sings: "Your mercy is great above the heavens and your truth reaches the clouds." Though he's hidden in a pit in the earth, God's steadfast love and truth shall penetrate the rocks and help David.

When David is at war against his enemies he puts not his trust in man, but his hope is in the Lord. David repeats God's promises back to God in which God has promised to triumph over all the kingdoms of earth. "The help of man is useless. It is He who shall tread down our enemies."

Dear Christians! The Lord will save you, His beloved, with His Right Hand. The Lord hears you and you shall be delivered. The Father has sent His Son, Jesus, who, though He was crucified, is risen, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father's throne. Through the strength of Jesus we will do valiantly! The Lord Jesus will tread down our enemies! When the trials of life seem to surround you like enemies and all appears dark, may your heart be steadfast in God; may your praise of Him awaken the dawn.

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia. In many ways, this Lenten season has been a season of juxtaposition, with the praises of the Psalter echoing during the somber season of Lent. And now, that we are here at Easter, the day that we sing out, "Alleluia," we have Jesus' last word from the cross. But anyone who has lived as a Christian experiences that juxtaposition constantly. In the midst of sorrow, we have joy. And in the midst of joy there is sorrow. For example, at the death of a loved one who is redeemed by Christ, there is immense sorrow. We weep for our brother or sister who is separated from us for a time. Yet we also rejoice that they are now with Jesus Christ, and that is far better than it is here on this earth. Or what about the feelings that a mother and father experience at the wedding of their son or daughter. It is such a joyous occasion, filled with good times and good memories, but in the midst of it, the parents still feel a little sorrow. For their child will fulfill God's command, leaving father and mother and cleaving to their spouse. Father and mother must now step back, advising, but no longer leading. Sorrow amidst joy and joy amidst sorrow.

So even today, there is sorrow amidst joy. We rejoice that Jesus is alive, but we sorrow that He had to die on the cross for our sins. He had to experience the unnatural wrenching apart of His body and His soul, things that were never meant to be separated. But now, they are reunited. Jesus' body and soul are forged anew, and never will He experience death again. Death thought to hold our Lord, but it could scarcely contain Him. And once Jesus' sabbath rest was complete, He broke down the door, and walked out. For death was not His master, rather He was the master of death. Jesus now breathes again, and will continue to draw breath forever and ever. So, let us take solace in this when our last breath draws near. Jesus is risen, and we will rise again, no matter how hard the world oppresses us, it cannot stop Jesus and His resurrection. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

The Sons of Solomon Discipline:

The Sons of Solomon is an ecumenical prayer habitus of catholic Christian men worldwide focused on the Psalms and Proverbs. We agree on what we all confess: The Three Ecumenical Creeds. We pray the prayers God gave us to pray, and seek together the wisdom that is from above.

How?

1. Carry a bible, prayer book, and crucifix with you.
What is a prayer book?

Anything that points you back to the scriptures in your daily life: a hymnal, catechism, theological book...Anything by which you find inspiration to open, read and ponder the scriptures
Is this required at all times?

We are not practitioners of Judaism.

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

Do not abandon prudence, practice wisdom and discipline.

Let the image of the perfect man be your spiritual focus.

2. Meditate on a Proverb every day.
How might one do that?

Translate the Proverb into your own words. Carry that thought with you on a piece of paper for a day. Pray that you might use the thought in a conversation. Leave the note alone for a week, then read it again and repeat the process. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the wisdom of the Holy Scriptures. Let the author teach you wisdom, that you may be thoroughly equipped.

3. Read the Psalms of the Diaspora each day:
Morning: Psalms 123, 125, 127
Mid-day: Psalms 124, 129
Vespers: Psalms 126, 128
Evening: Psalms 130, 131

February 14 – Psalm 107

107:19 – 20 **Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.**

Today, you are likely to hear, or have heard, your pastor utter this phrase, "Remember, O Man, that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return." After all, today is Ash Wednesday, a day when we remember the weight of our sins and the price of sin. As St. Paul declares, "**For the wages of sin is death**" (Romans 6:23a). This Psalm is the perfect compliment to Ash Wednesday. For yes, death seems to reign in our world unopposed. No matter how much we properly exercise, no matter how healthy a diet we eat, no matter how careful we live, death is inevitable. But death does not reign; Jesus Christ does. And He has conquered death. This Psalm is filled with the reality that those who cry out to Jesus will be saved. First it is those who are wandering, lost in the wilderness, without a city. They will be saved when Jesus finds them and brings them into His city, into the heavenly new Jerusalem, which is the Church. Next, it's those who are held captive by their sins, living in the shadow of death. It is Christ who breaks their chains, bursts their bonds, and brought them out of darkness into His marvelous light. And it continues with those who are afflicted, and with those who are tossed about like sailors on the sea, and with those who live in an arid land, and those who are poor. All of these things are remedied by Christ. But one theme that permeates this Psalm is being hungry, and that God will satisfy that hunger. Jesus says, "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled**" (Matt 5:6). Jesus does provide for us our daily bread, and also a bread that does not perish. "**And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst'**" (John 6:35). This Lenten season, let us remember the mercies of Jesus Christ, and treasure His bread, which will sustain us these 40 days and beyond. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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The Hebron Collegium is a gap year Bible School for men in Rockford, Illinois. A semi-monastic boot camp for Christian living. Cowards and slackers need not apply.

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A Note from Rev. Franson (Nythrius/Rev Franson):

You will need your Bible! This devotional is a study on book 5 of the Psalms. While we could fit SOME of them, we cannot possibly fit all the readings in this booklet. With every devotional, there will be a selection from Psalms. Please read these passages to get a full understanding of what the devotional writer is saying.

The Daughters of Wisdom Discipline:
Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, pray for the Patriarchy. Pray for the blessings God has promised. Pray for God's will to be done.

Morning: Psalm 133, 1 Samuel 2: 1 – 10

Meditate on how joyous it is when brothers dwell together in unity! For additional morning encouragement, add the Song of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as she gives thanks to God.

Midday: Proverbs 31

The Wisdom of the mother of King Lemuel. Meditate on the promises God gives to the wife that trust his words. Meditate on the blessings you are given. Consider the life presented therein, and rejoice in it.

Vespers: Psalm 135 (optional)

Remember the mighty works of the LORD Jesus, and remember the folly of those who trust in idols of silver and gold (and plastic).

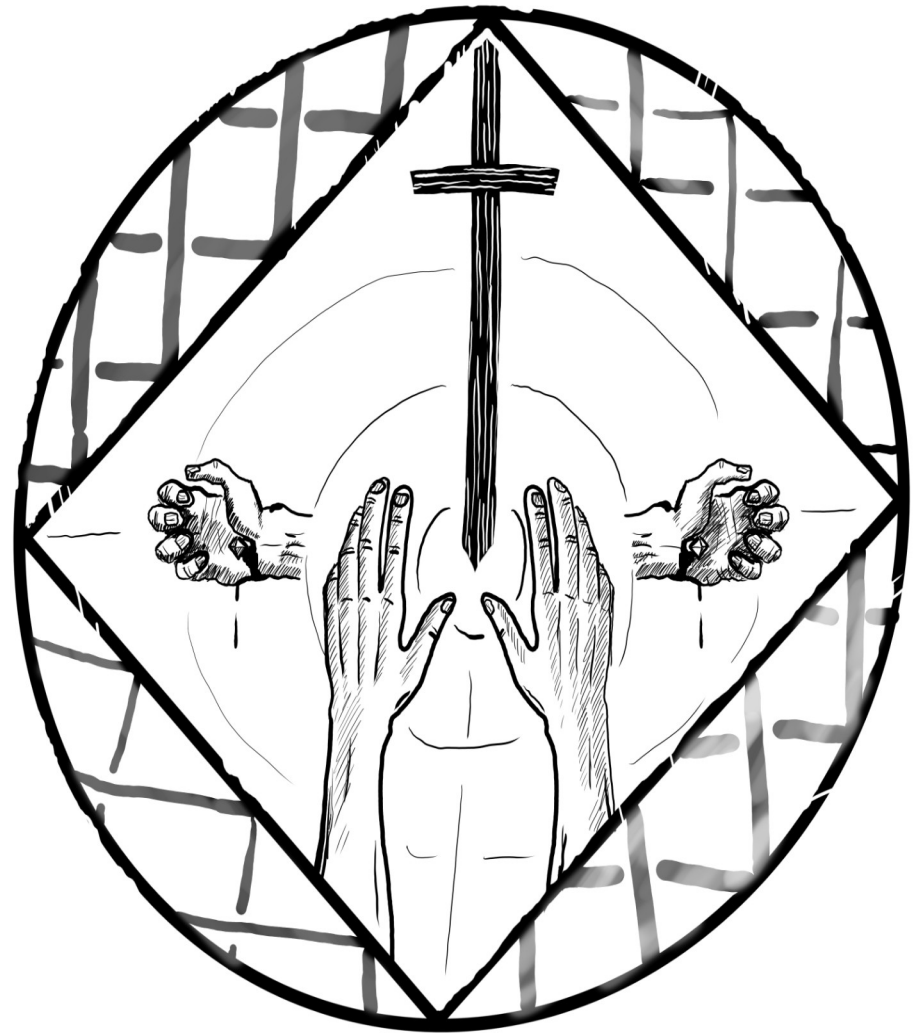
Compline: Psalm 134, Magnificat

Bless the LORD Jesus at the end of the day, and add in the Song of Mary, the mother of our LORD, as she gives thanks to God.

Learn more about this discipline at <https://sonsofsolomon.net/dow>

REMEMBER, O MAN, THAT
THOU ART DUST, AND TO
DUST THOU SHALT
RETURN

THE HEBRON COLLEGIUM
DEVOTIONAL



CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS
RISEN INDEED,
ALLELUIA!

LENT 2024