



TOGETHER

ON THE JOURNEY

LENTEN  
DEVOTIONS

 spring road  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

# week 2

We are indebted to the numerous voices of believers from churches from all over North America in providing rich thoughts for us in this season of growth. Some may even be familiar ones. May these texts and these words inspire you and lead your imagination of the Kingdom to new heights as you consider the depth of His love for you.

**LENT IS A CALL TO RENEW A COMMITMENT GROWN DULL, PERHAPS, BY A LIFE MORE MARKED BY ROUTINE THAN BY REFLECTION.**

Joan Chittister, O.S.B. *The Liturgical Year*, p.111

Janet Lund

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**March 5**

**Matthew 7:7-12**

I hate to publicly admit parenting failures, but in a spirit of transparency, you're about to hear one. In an effort to connect with my kids, I have been known to ask the universally kid-dreaded question, "How was your day?" Not surprisingly, the majority of my kids' responses were, "good," "fine," or "okay." I never received one bit of useful or insightful information into my kids' lives, yet I kept asking. I wanted details, connection. I wanted to hear about their world, see it through their eyes. I eventually wised up and changed my strategy. My new question became, "Tell me about your High, Low, and Ho?" We define Highs as the best/favorite part of the day, Lows as those less than perfect moments, and Hos, as in ho, ho, ho, are the funny or interesting things that happened.

With this simple rephrasing of my question, I began to uncover details of my teenagers' lives. Even if I already knew the story they were telling, it was enlightening for me to hear it from their perspective. They began sharing details of their victories and struggles, triumphs and tribulations. This precious glimpse into their day, allowed me to discover ways I could help and encourage them. With this valuable information, I was able to become a cheerleader and coach on the sidelines of their lives.

When Jesus encourages his followers to ASK, SEEK, and KNOCK in Matthew 7, I can't help but wonder if He is essentially wanting the same thing from us that I want from my kids—details. He wants us to pour our hearts out to Him, to share our Highs, Lows, and Hos. By ASKING our Heavenly Father for our needs and desires, we are sharing our hearts with Him and developing a closeness only communication can cultivate. True intimacy requires this sharing, trust, and openness. When we actively SEEK Him, we begin to discover His work in our lives and the world at large. By developing a habit of Asking and Seeking, we are refining and maturing our faith. Jesus also reminds us in this passage that our Heavenly Father is trustworthy and loving. His desire is always for our good (Romans 8:28). As we move through this Lenten season, let's be a church that is actively Asking, Seeking, and Knocking—intentionally pouring out the details of our lives to our Abba Father, seeking His work in the world, and actively sharing His love with all we meet.

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Jon Weatherly

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March 6

Matthew 5:20-26

For most of today's Bible readers, the Pharisees are the bad guys, condescending keepers of pettifogging rules who opposed Jesus at every turn. That wasn't true for Jesus' contemporaries, however. In Jesus' time, the Pharisees were the most highly respected sect of Judaism, esteemed for their zealous observance of God's instruction.

We need to remember that when we listen to Jesus say that those who enter God's reign need a righteousness greater than the Pharisees' righteousness. That brash statement should have us asking, "How in the world will anyone be better than the best?"

Jesus gives the answer, starting in the paragraph that follows. If God is to reign as King, God must reign over all that exists, in heaven and on earth. That includes especially reigning over human lives. But that includes especially the part of those human lives that *God alone can see*: the inner life, the mind and heart. That means plenty on the outside--don't murder for a start--but fundamentally something on the inside: hatred and anger replaced with love and mercy.

Why those things? Because they're what God has shown us. He made the first, decisive move, inviting into his reign people who are as weak and helpless as they are arrogant and rebellious. He invited us to become his subjects despite our willful failures, not because of our awesome righteousness. And as we respond to God's grace, the righteousness that becomes ours--inside and out--is the life we've always longed for, even when we didn't admit it.

Funny thing about that kingdom "righteousness": it takes the pressure off. I no longer need to be a big, strong deal. I admit that I'm the helpless recipient of God's grace, and I'm off on the God-given adventure of transformation and empowerment to be like God-become-human Jesus. I start seeing others as people more like myself than I'd ever realized, sensing God's love replacing my old fears that left me hostile. God's grace, God's Spirit, God's love transform me.

Righteousness looks like God, inside and out. That beats the best you've dreamed for yourself.

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*John is a Professor of New Testament, Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost at [Johnson University](#)*

Brian Moll

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March 7

John 15:1, 6-15

In August of 1973 a little boy and his uncle flew to the United States from Haiti. Over the course of the next decade this child would be abused, abandoned, and molested by the very people who claimed to love him so dearly. At age twelve he ran away, sleeping behind the bushes across the street from his apartment in Brooklyn, NY. He didn't know where to go, only that he felt safer in the cold than in his own home.

The authorities placed him in foster care, where he regularly received the same kind of 'love' as he did from his family. Wounded, broken, and alone, the four year old that found himself on foreign soil years ago now had the body of a grown man, yet his mind was so fragile, so clogged with memories of pain and shame, that lying in a hospital bed was the only time he could trust those trying to help.

Four decades later, this grey-haired, undocumented immigrant sleeps inside the busiest train station in the US as millions of people walk by and wonder why this seemingly able-bodied man can't just snap out of it, get a job, and stop being a burden to hard-working individuals who pay their taxes. Too ashamed to ask for help, and too scared to trust anyone who approaches him, he spends his days in isolation and his nights trying to find a place to rest in the city that never sleeps.

It's February of 2018; imagine you're on vacation in New York City, and you see a man on the steps of Penn Station, sitting next to a ticket booth, smelling like he hasn't showered in months. How do you follow Christ's command to "love one another as I have loved you"?

How can you prepare your heart and mind *now* for moments like these that are sure to come? Is there anything that needs to be removed from your heart (prejudice, fear, stereotypes) so the Spirit of God can bear good fruit in you through the way you see and treat others?

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*Brian is the founding pastor of Forefront Church in NYC. He currently works with the homeless.*

Derek Sweatman

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March 8

Luke 6:27-38

Showing the Future

Ah, the old “love your enemies” teaching.

Great.

If there’s a list of Jesus’ teachings we’d like to avoid, this one’s in the top five.

Let’s take a closer look:

Jesus says, “love your enemies and *do good* to those who hate you.” I know, I know. Loving someone and doing good for someone sound like two different things – love is a state a mind, something we could all muster; doing good sounds like interaction, something we’re often trying to avoid with people who “hate” us.

It gets worse.

There are four Greek words for love, and Jesus chose **agapaō** (verb), a kind of love we read about as far back as Homer, and one that’s been labeled by every generation since as something quite elusive and very hard to master, perhaps even impossible. It is a charitable love, one that acts on the needs of others, and it does so without the expectation of reward or recognition. Think: **grace**.

Let’s review:

1. Love your enemies,
2. do good to them,
3. and all without reward.

Why?

In the full teaching, Jesus raises good questions about who gets the **last word** in a world of injustice and oppression. His suggested “acts of love” in are in fact quite subversive to such systems. To choose love over retaliation is not just to act like Jesus, it is to counter hate and greed and status with something unanswerable. And in doing so, it is not the act of injustice that gets the last word, it’s **love**.

Love has the final say.

Paul writes: “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Agape is the destination.  
Agape is where the universe is headed.  
Agape is what will remain.

The future is love, and nothing else.

**How might we live this out today?**

CHARITY DOES NOT DWINDLE INTO MERELY NATURAL LOVE BUT NATURAL LOVE IS TAKEN UP INTO, MADE THE TUNED AND OBEDIENT INSTRUMENT OF, LOVE HIMSELF.

C.S. Lewis, [The Four Loves](#) (p.134)

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**Beth Jarvis**

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**March 9**

**Matthew 20:17-28**

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem.

If we're following him, this is where the Lenten journey is taking us as well.

In today's text, we hear what this journey means to him. He's going to suffer and die, but rise again. Then there's a second statement: this community will not be like the rest. You will be made up of servants. Nestled in between these two statements is a conversation between Jesus, the sons of Zebedee, and their mother.

Jesus asks her, "What do you want?" And there's nothing subtle about her reply. "Can my sons sit at your right and left side?"

Bold. She knows what she wants for her sons. She wants titles. And can you blame her? She needs to know now how her sons will be defined, because there she too will be defined. They are an extension of herself. She's not ready to go through life with this community not knowing what they are to it.

I recently went through a transition year where most of the year I did not have a job. At the same time, my husband's job at the university where he teaches meant going to a lot of new faculty parties. There was that inevitable question over cocktail glasses, "So, what do you do?"

And every single time I would awkwardly freeze. Once, trying to just give the reason for why I was at the party, I just said, "I'm married" and when I saw the questioner roll his eyes as if to say, "Oh, you're one of those women, who don't think," I quickly blurted out, "No, I mean I read. I read!"

The conversation only got better from there.

There's something about the wife of Zebedee's desire to get at the *what* for her life and for her sons' lives that connects to something deep, I believe, in all of us. We all live in uncertain transitions.

The days are now getting longer. We've survived the winter. There's a thought of spring. Maybe I'll go for a run.

Jesus is going to Jerusalem, now. Lent leads to Easter, and there's a cross waiting there. The community around the cross will be different.

When we fast forward to the cross in Matthew's gospel, we find the mother of Zebedee's sons there (27:56). There she is, finding her place at the side of Jesus, a place of servanthood, a place defined by a cross.

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**Isaac Schade**

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**March 10**

**Luke 16:19-31**

***Attentiveness***

"Daddy, eat Choo-choo-way-way (Chick-fil-A). Chichin (chicken), fize (fries), yeyoh dip (yellow dip)." "Daddy, play chains (trains)." "Daddy, play bastetbawl (basketball)." "Daddy, walk maaawwwl (mall)." "Daddy, yemen water, peeees (lemon water, please)."

These are some of the phrases I hear in a given day from my two-year-old son Paxton. My wife and I spend a lot of healthy, intentional time with him, but things around the house tend to get busy and crazy. So sometimes I unfortunately don't hear Pax when he asks for something or when he wants to do something. Or sometimes, I must shamefully admit, I'm too absorbed in what I'm doing to notice.

In those moments, my son is seeking my attention. He wants me to pay attention to him. To see him. To fix my eyes upon him. To spend time with him. To play with him. To help provide for his

physical and material needs, because he can't yet do that for himself.

Such was the life of a poor man named Lazarus. In Luke 16.19-31, Jesus tells a parable about this man Lazarus, who sits daily at the gate of an unnamed rich man waiting in the hopes of being noticed; or better yet, having his physical needs attended to. But the rich man never does. Perhaps he was too busy or too self-absorbed to notice? Perhaps ignorance was bliss? Or maybe he just didn't care?

Let this not be true of us.

Curiously, Lazarus is the only person named in any of Jesus' parables. Why? Jesus wants us to remember this man. Jesus wants to humanize this man whom others have marginalized. Jesus wants to remind us that every human has worth.

In this season of Lent, where we spend our time focusing our attention on and preparing for the Easter season, let's be intentional about noticing the people Jesus noticed. Not just those who can offer us something, or advance our careers, or provide social status. Not just like-minded people. Everyone.

Be attentive.

Be free from your screens.

Be active.

Be present.

Be curious.

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