

Our

Coming

Salvation

Our Coming Salvation

2025 Lenten Devotional

This year the forty days of Lent begin with Ash Wednesday on March 5th and runs through the joy of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, April 20th. Lent is a time for reflection, repentance, and renewal for Christians. It is the most important time of the year to nurture our inner self as we prepare to celebrate the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Reflection and nourishing our soul can be accomplished in many ways including worship, music, prayer, Bible studies, and serving others, just to name a few.
- Repentance (regret or remorse) is an attitude in which we are willing to let go of the things that prevent us from growing in spiritual maturity.
- Renewal is a continuing process of the death of the old and familiar, and being reborn into new hope, new trust, new love, and new joy; being born into a new creation!

In **Our Coming Salvation** we will focus on the prophecies of Jesus' life, crucifixion, resurrection, and second coming. Included are daily devotions Monday through Friday and Holy Week through Easter Sunday. Each day begins with Scripture readings; one or more from the Old Testament revealing the prophecy, and one or more from the New Testament that shows the prophecy fulfilled. I have added Affirmations of Faith, Scripture, and prayers on the weekends. Scripture will be from the NIV (New International Version) Bible unless otherwise noted. If you do not have a Bible, contact the church office and they will be happy to offer you one.

God reveals Biblical truths to us as we grow closer to Him. My prayer is that this devotional will reveal new truths to you to help you better understand God's Word, strengthen your faith, and increase your love for Jesus, all to help you become a stronger Christian.

God's blessings on your journey!

Our Coming Salvation is written by Nancy Mahowald who is a member of Coon Rapids United Methodist Church in Coon Rapids, MN.

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March 5

The Old Testament Prophecy: When sin enters the world, God promises a Savior.

“I will make you and the woman enemies to each other. Your children and her children will be enemies. You will bite her child’s foot, but he will crush your head.” Genesis 3:15 (ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17)

I’ve always had a hard time understanding that Genesis scripture passage. In my Life Application Bible, they explain the passage this way: “Satan is our enemy. He will do anything he can to get us to follow his evil, deadly path. The phrase ‘you will bite her child’s foot’ refers to Satan’s repeated attempts to defeat Christ during His life on earth. ‘He will crush your head’ foreshadows Satan’s defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A bite on the foot is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is. Already God was revealing His plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.” That makes sense to me now!

God delivered on His promise of a Savior. When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead three days later, He ensured eternal life to everyone who believes in Him. Satan cannot claim those who belong to Jesus. Hallelujah!

Prayer: Oh God, thank you for your perfect plan. You sent Jesus into the world to teach me how to live life to the fullest. He sacrificed Himself so that my sins would be forgiven, and I could be reconciled to you. Thank you for saving me. Amen.

March 6

The Old Testament Prophecy: Jesus will be born to a virgin

“All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).” (Isaiah 7:14, NLT)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ – which means, ‘God with us’. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.” (Matthew 1:18-25)

Each time I read the stories of Joseph and Mary, I am amazed by their actions. Mary said “yes” to the angel when she heard God’s plan for her to become pregnant with the Son of God. She said, *“I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said.”* (Luke 1:38).

And how Joseph listened and reacted to the angel of the Lord in a dream to not divorce Mary but to take her home with him. And he did as the angel said. They were both so brave and faithful! It’s obvious that they trusted God.

The official United Methodist doctrine reads that “Jesus was the Son of God, the child of the virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, truly God and truly Man, who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven.”

God took human form in the body of Christ and because God was incarnated in Christ (incarnation literally means ‘to take on flesh’), Christ is fully human and fully God, truly God and truly Man. This doctrine took shape when they created the Nicene Creed in the 4th century in Nicea. I have shared the Nicene Creed the day after tomorrow.

Prayer: I give you thanks for Joseph and Mary, Lord. They are such role models for me. Oh, that I would respond in the same way! You have given me courage, Lord, to do things that I would never have dreamed of doing. Thank you for guiding my life. Now your perfect plan has begun. Immanuel, God is with us! Amen.

March 7

The Old Testament Prophecy: Jesus is the Son of God

“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:11b-14a, 16)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.’” (Luke 1:30-33)

“... the gospel [of God] he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:2-4, 6)

In the Old Testament scripture, David wanted to build a temple for the Lord because currently God dwelled in a tent and moved from place to place. This was the Ark of the Covenant that moved with the Israelites through the desert during the Exile out of Egypt.

David told Nathan the prophet his plan to build a temple and that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan. The Lord’s reply to David was “No”. God needed David to be the leader of the Israelites, not a builder. God had something better in mind. David’s offspring would build a house for God. Yes, Jesus, a direct descendant of David’s line, will fulfill this prophecy. At the end times Jesus will return to earth and establish the New Jerusalem and He will reign forever.

God’s better plan came to fruition. A virgin girl named Mary became pregnant and gave birth to a Son and named Him Jesus, the Son of God.

Prayer: God, you always have the better plan. When I pray to you and your answer to me is “No”, I need to remember that you always have my best interests in mind and that you have a better plan for me than I have for myself. I will do my best not to be disappointed or angry at your “no” but to wait in happy anticipation to see what you will reveal to me! Amen.

The Nicene Creed set forth the key affirmations concerning the Christian faith and served as a guide in combating heretical or false teaching.

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in the one holy catholic* and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*universal

The United Methodist Hymnal #880.

March 10

The Old Testament Prophecy: Jesus will be called Immanuel [God with us]

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they enjoyed their wedding night, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn’t know that.) Joseph, chagrined but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced. While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God’s angel spoke in the dream: ‘Joseph, son of David, don’t hesitate to get married. Mary’s pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God’s Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—“God saves”—because he will save his people from their sins.’ This would bring the prophet’s embryonic revelation to full term:

*‘Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son;
They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for “God is with us”).’”
(Matthew 1:18-23, MSG)*

Immanuel – God with us. I don’t know about you, but I KNOW that God is with me. I have experienced supernatural things that can only be explained by the power of God. He has saved me from car accidents. He has blessed me by answering me with His voice when I was praying desperately for someone else. He has literally slowed the hands of time for me, more than once. I found a stone on my carpet once a month for a year after my husband died. He had collected stones.

And these are just a few examples and only the things that I am aware of. How many times did He intervene in a situation that I knew nothing about? The next time you are running late, perhaps God is saving you from a catastrophe. Have you run into a detour? Maybe there’s a good reason.

Trust me, friends, our God is with us! If you have an example of God with you, I would love to hear about it!

Prayer: Immanuel, God with us, thank you for your protection and your care for me. I have experienced the power of your Presence many times. I know that you are right by my side. How comforting it is! Amen.

March 11

The Old Testament Prophecy: Jesus is a Lamb without blemish

“Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.” (Exodus 12:3,5)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“You know that in the past the way you were living was useless. It was a way of life you learned from those who lived before you. But you were saved from that way of living. You were bought, but not with things that ruin like gold or silver. You were bought with the precious blood of Christ’s death. He was a pure and perfect sacrificial Lamb. Christ was chosen before the world was made, but he was shown to the world in these last times for you.” (1 Peter 1:18-20, ERV)

In the Exodus passage above, God was giving specific instructions to Moses and Aaron to prepare for the Passover. The Israelites were being held as slaves in Egypt. God was going to set them free. The Lord had told Pharaoh through Moses to “Let my people go!” Each time Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites, God sent plagues on Egypt, ten in all. The last plague was on the firstborn. The firstborn child of every family was going to die. God told Moses and Aaron to have each Israelite family choose a lamb or goat that had no blemish; that was perfect. When they sacrificed the animal, they were to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses. God said to them, *“The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”* (Exodus 12:13) The firstborn children in those households would be saved. Passover was the Israelite’s Independence Day! God told them to *“commemorate it for generations to come as a festival to the Lord – a lasting ordinance.”* (Exodus 12:14)

The Lamb without blemish. That was Jesus. Even though He was tempted by Satan like we are, He never gave in; He never sinned. He was the pure and perfect sacrificial Lamb. His blood was shed to set us free – free from sin. We celebrate His sacrifice on the cross for us when we take Holy Communion. Holy Communion, like Passover, commemorates a time of pain and of bloodshed at Calvary and a time of freedom and deliverance for all believers.

Prayer: Holy One, thank you for delivering me as God delivered the Israelites. Help me to remember that the blood on the doorframes in Egypt is the same blood [from the Sacrificial Lamb] in the cup of Communion. The Israelites were set free from slavery in Egypt, and I am set free from the slavery of sin. Thanks be to God! Amen.

March 12

The Old Testament Prophecy: Jesus will be humble and meek

“Take a good look at my servant. I’m backing him to the hilt. He’s the one I chose, and I couldn’t be more pleased with him. I’ve bathed him with my Spirit, my life. He’ll set everything right among the nations. He won’t call attention to what he does with loud speeches or gaudy parades. He won’t brush aside the bruised and the hurt and he won’t disregard the small and insignificant, but he’ll steadily and firmly set things right.” (Isaiah 42:1-3, MSG)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Come to me all of you who are tired from the heavy burden you have been forced to carry. I will give you rest. Accept my teaching. Learn from me. I am gentle and humble in spirit. And you will be able to get some rest. Yes, the teaching that I ask you to accept is easy. The load I give you to carry is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, ERV)

Jesus was chosen by God to *“steadily and firmly set things right.”* When He entered Jerusalem, He wasn’t clothed as a centurion with metal armor and riding a stallion. No, He came riding on a donkey. I thought He was supposed to make things right! He didn’t come as expected.

Jesus didn’t live His life as people expected either. He hung around with tax collectors and prostitutes. As you learn more and more about Jesus you will realize that He didn’t rub shoulders with the rich and the famous; He was accepting of everyone, no matter who they were. He even invited Paul, who had been a persecutor and murderer of Christians before God got ahold of him and changed his heart, to be one of His disciples.

Jesus is gentle and humble. He is inviting us to come to Him, to learn from His example. If everyone could live their lives as Jesus did, the world would be set right. Won’t you join Him and do your part?

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for your invitation. Show me where I can help the most. Keep reminding me to offer a hand of friendship to someone who feels left out. Continue to stretch me and mold me to become more like you. Cover me with your grace. Amen.

March 13

The Old Testament Prophecy: Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey

“People of Zion, rejoice! People of Jerusalem, shout with joy! Look, your king is coming to you! He is the good king who won the victory, but he is humble. He is riding on a donkey, on a young donkey born from a work animal.” (Zechariah 9:9, ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.’ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ‘Say to the Daughter of Zion, “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”’ (Matthew 21:1-5)

Here He comes! But wait, He’s on a donkey! What? The Israelites were waiting to be rescued from the Roman Empire. They had prayed to God for a King to come to set them free from slavery! And they had expected their King to come on a white stallion. What happened?

What happened is that God had a better plan. He would not only set the Israelites free, but all of mankind! He sent a gentle Savior who loved everyone, who prayed to God, who taught His disciples how to live and love and have the most full, complete life.

When we accept Jesus into our hearts, our lives change. For some people it is a drastic, overnight change. But, for most of us, it is a slow, gradual change over a longer period. We give up things that are sinful and hurtful one at a time. Our spiritual selves grow over time through prayer, study, reading Scripture, worship, and service to others. Our humble King teaches us how to live life to the fullest.

Prayer: Holy God, I love that you sent a humble servant to be my leader. I have so many lessons to learn from Him. When the world is full of war and catastrophe, perhaps one little room in my home can be an oasis where I can meet with my Savior and have a conversation. He can lead me beside quiet waters and restore my soul. I am beyond grateful. Amen.

March 14

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be hated without reason or cause

“Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; let not those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye. Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me.” (Psalm 35:19, 69:4a)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, ‘You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.’” (Luke 23:13-15)

Have you ever been accused of something that you didn't do? I have. I was incredulous! I was accused of making a phone call to someone at their workplace and telling lies about one of the employees. First, I didn't know where this person worked, so I wouldn't have been able to get the phone number. This was about 50 years ago, so there were no cell phones or home computers. Second, I hardly knew the person I was supposed to be telling lies about, so that didn't make sense. Why would I do that? But, worst of all, some people in the extended family believed them and not me. It hurt and really left me bewildered.

You can present your case and hope they change their minds. But, if they don't, there will remain a fracture in relationships. At least, in my case, I was considered guilty by only a few people. I didn't have to appear in court and I wasn't convicted and sentenced in the legal system.

Jesus had done nothing wrong. Pilate and Herod could not find any basis for the accusations against Him. But the people condemned Him. They yelled, *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”* And they led Jesus away to be nailed to a cross.

Prayer: Lord, I have been falsely accused, but I cannot fathom what you went through. You bore the brunt of your accusation; you were wrongly convicted and put to death. But you knew what was going to happen! After what you suffered, you were the conqueror! You are everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Matthew 6:9-13, NLT)

Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us today the food we need,
and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.
*For yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen.

*Some later manuscripts added this line.

March 17

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be despised and rejected

“Who believes what we’ve heard and seen? Who would have thought GOD’s saving power would look like this? The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling, a scrubby plant in a parched field. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look. He was looked down on and passed over, a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand. One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum. But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed. We’re all like sheep who’ve wandered off and gotten lost. We’ve all done our own thing, gone our own way. And GOD has piled all our sins, everything we’ve done wrong, on him, on him.” (Isaiah 53:1-3 MSG)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?’ asked the governor. ‘Barabbas,’ they answered. ‘What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?’ Pilate asked. They all answered, ‘Crucify him!’ ‘Why? What crime has he committed?’ asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify him!’” (Matthew 27:21-23)

The Isaiah passage above is amazing to me. And this is just a small part of the text describing our prophesied Savior. It begins with Isaiah 51:17-52:10. (If you don’t have a copy of The Message, you can go on your computer to BibleGateway.com. You can look up Bible passages in many different versions.) What’s amazing to me is how detailed this prophecy is and how it describes Jesus and what He did for us. And it was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born!

The New Testament Scripture is amazing to me, too, but for a very different reason. Jesus has been imprisoned. It was the governor’s custom to release a prisoner during the Feast, so Pilate asked the people who they wanted him to release, Jesus or Barabbas (a notorious murderer). The crowd chose Barabbas, which surprised even Pilate! Why would they choose such a violent prisoner over Jesus, who had done nothing wrong?

Do we still choose Barabbas over Jesus today? Do we choose human strength and power over the salvation of our Lord?

Prayer: Lord, help me to make the right decision. I want to choose you every time! It’s tempting to choose the power of mankind when I feel weak and have no voice. But then I remember that I have the Lord of Creation to rely on! That’s what I call strength! Amen.

March 18

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be persecuted

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:5, 7a)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said.” (Matthew 27:27-29)

Crucifixion was the most painful way to die. Jesus was not only hung on a cross, but He was made fun of, spit upon, beaten, and speared. He was humiliated when He was stripped in front of the whole company of soldiers. He took all of this and never uttered a word.

Some people then thought that He had brought this on Himself ... that He had done something wrong, and God was punishing Him for what He had done. Rather, God had piled all our sins on Jesus. Our sins are what crushed and bruised Him. Jesus took our punishment, and we were the ones who were healed and set free.

Prayer: Lord, I don’t have enough words to thank you for what you endured for me. The fact that you were totally innocent and yet took that persecution and humiliation for me, and the rest of humankind, is almost impossible to imagine. I will honor you and praise you all the days of my life. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

March 19

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would serve God with perfect obedience

“The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious, I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.” (Isaiah 50:4-6)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’” (Matthew 26:39)

“So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.’” (John 8:28)

Jesus and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane. He left His disciples and went to pray alone. He asked His Father if the cup of suffering could be taken from Him. He wasn't being rebellious, His anguish was worse than the thought of the crucifixion because He knew that when He took all our sins upon Himself, He would be separated from God. Jesus couldn't imagine the pain that would cause Him.

But Jesus finished His prayer asking that God's will be done, not His. You need to trust in God and be obedient to Him. Are you able to pray that God's will be done and not your own?

Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, and people believed what He said after He was crucified and resurrected. Truly, He came from God.

Prayer: God, I trust in you. I try hard to be obedient although I know I fall short. When I am facing a very difficult decision or going through a particularly trying time, I know how I want it to end. But I need to always pray that your will be done, not mine. No matter what. Amen.

March 20

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be ‘numbered with the transgressors’

“For this reason, I will treat him as one of my great people. I will give him the rewards of one who wins in battle, and he will share them with his powerful ones. I will do this because he gave his life for the people. He was considered a criminal, but the truth is, he carried away the sins of many. Now he will stand before me and speak for those who have sinned.” (Isaiah 53:12, ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.” (Luke 22:37)

“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.” (Luke 23:32)

Jesus was considered a criminal. He was found guilty along with two others who were convicted. They would be led to Calvary and crucified together.

One of the other criminals threw insults at Jesus and asked Him to save Himself and them. The second criminal stated, *“We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’* Then he said, *‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’* Jesus answered him, *‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.’”* (Luke 23:41-43) Isn’t that just like Jesus? He forgave the sins of the second criminal and let him know that, when he died, he would be going to heaven and would enjoy everlasting life.

In the Old Testament Scripture, God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah. Although Jesus was considered a criminal, God sees Him as a warrior who won a battle. Isn’t that what He did? He laid down His life to carry away our sins and He interceded for us so that we could be reconciled to God. God cannot be in the presence of sin, so Jesus made us clean; we are sinless and able to come before God.

Prayer: Heavenly One, thank you for taking away my sins. You made me as clean as snow. Help me to stay clean, and when I can’t, forgive me yet again when I confess my sins to you. You know my heart. Amen.

March 21

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be stripped of His clothing

“I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” (Psalm 22:17-18)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.’” (Luke 23:34-35)

One of the most humiliating experiences I can think of would be to be stripped of your clothing in front of everyone. That is what happened to Jesus.

The Roman soldiers in charge of crucifixions would take the clothing of those who were condemned. They took Jesus’ pieces of clothing and divided them into four equal shares. The soldiers gambled by throwing dice to see who would get what. The most expensive piece was Jesus’ robe because it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

Prayer: Oh Jesus, I’m sorry you had to experience the humiliation, the persecution, the rejection, but most especially the crucifixion. You were willing to be condemned for me. But you were obedient to your Father. You took all my sin upon yourself. I will do my best to be worthy of your sacrifice. Amen.

THE WORLD METHODIST SOCIAL AFFIRMATION

We believe in God, creator of the world and of all people;
and in Jesus Christ, incarnate among us, who died and rose again;
and in the Holy Spirit, present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort.

We believe; God, help our unbelief.

We rejoice in every sign of God's kingdom:
in the upholding of human dignity and community;
in every expression of love, justice, and reconciliation;
in each act of self-giving on behalf of others;
in the abundance of God's gifts entrusted to us that all may have enough;
in all responsible use of earth's resources.

Glory be to God on high; and on earth, peace.

We confess our sin, individual and collective,
by silence and action:
through the violation of human dignity based on race, class, age, sex, nation, or faith;
through the exploitation of people because of greed and indifference;
through the misuse of power in personal, communal, national and international life;
through the search for security by those military and economic forces
that threaten human existence;
through the abuse of technology which endangers the earth and all life upon it.

**Lord, have mercy;
Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy.**

We commit ourselves individually and as a community to the way of Christ:
to take up the cross;
to seek abundant life for all humanity;
to struggle for peace with justice and freedom;
to risk ourselves in faith, hope, and love,
praying that God's kingdom may come.

Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

March 24

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be spat upon and beaten

“I followed orders, stood there and took it while they beat me, held steady while they pulled out my beard, didn’t dodge their insults, faced them as they spit in my face. And the Master, GOD, stays right there and helps me, so I’m not disgraced. Therefore, I set my face like flint, confident that I’ll never regret this.” (Isaiah 50:6-7, The MSG)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.” (Matthew 26:67, 27:30)

Jesus knew what He was called to do. He didn’t fight back. He never even said a word as He was being tormented and humiliated.

In the Isaiah prophecy, it states that God stayed with Him and helped Him. I love the last line, *“confident that I’ll never regret this.”* Jesus gave His life for His disciples, for you and for me and for all those who will choose to follow Him in the future. He did it for His Father, He did it for love, and He has never regretted it. Even with all the humiliation and torture, He has never regretted it.

Prayer: Holy One, thank you for your strength. You trusted your Father and He was with you through everything you suffered. Thank you for your obedience. I know that He is with me, too, every minute of the day. I am so grateful for His love for me. Amen.

March 25

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be pierced

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.” (Zechariah 12:10)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken,’ and, as another scripture says, ‘They will look on the one they have pierced.’” (John 19:34-37)

The Roman soldiers who oversaw crucifixions were experienced. They could tell whether a man was dead or still alive because they had seen so many. When they pierced Jesus’ side and saw *“a sudden flow of blood and water”*, they knew Jesus was dead. We know now that the sac around the heart and the heart itself had been pierced.

Some people speculate that Jesus only passed out and that is how He came back to life. Because we have the eyewitness reports from those soldiers, we know that Jesus was indeed dead and was Resurrected after three days.

Even His disciple, Thomas, didn’t believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until Jesus appeared to the disciples in a locked room. *“Then He said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”* (John 20:27-28)

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for doubting Thomas. His story helped my father-in-law convert from a doubter to a believer. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to witness to him. I believe, Lord, help my unbelief! In Jesus’ Name, amen.

March 26

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah's suffering would include thirst

"My mouth is as dry as a piece of baked pottery. My tongue is sticking to the roof of my mouth. You have left me dying in the dust." (Psalm 22:15, ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

"Later, knowing that everything was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.' A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips." (John 19:28-29)

What an Old Testament prophecy that is! That's how I felt almost every morning last year. I mentioned it to my doctor, and he said I probably have dry mouth disease. I never knew there was such a thing! When I saw my dentist later that month, he said to me, "Is your mouth dry every morning? Does your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth?" I told him that it was and it does and I thought I just slept with my mouth open. Nope. It's an actual diagnosis. I now have prescription toothpaste and mouthwash and sleep with a circular pillow around my neck. It has helped.

What I don't understand is what the New Testament shares. Why in the world would you offer wine vinegar to someone who is thirsty? Why not water? Maybe in those days and in that time and place the wine vinegar was cheaper than water! I don't think that wine vinegar quenched Jesus' thirst.

Prayer: Oh, Lord, I wish I would have had some water to offer you then. In your love for me you turn things around - you offer me your Living Water. Thank you for your incredible gift. I accept. Amen.

March 27

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be mocked for His faith in God

“He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”
(Psalm 22:8)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”
(Matthew 27:43)

Have you ever been mocked for your faith in God? I hope not. Although I know that some people are. Many people in other countries are not only mocked for their faith in God, but they are killed for their faith. There are countries where it is against the law to be a Christian and to meet to worship our God.

The Roman soldiers who mocked Jesus thought that they were right when Jesus wasn't rescued from the cross. His God didn't deliver Him, therefore, He can't be the Son of God. What they didn't realize is that God was in control all along. This perfect plan to sacrifice His only Son was God's way of reconciling us to Himself. The Lord's sacrifice would be rewarded. Jesus would be lifted up to sit at the right hand of His Father and we are rewarded with eternal life with Him.

Prayer: Almighty God, you could have rescued Jesus from the cross, but you didn't for my sake. Thank you for your love for me. I love you, too, and praise your Holy Name! Amen.

March 28

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would cry out to God

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?” (Psalm 22:1)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ - which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:46)

Jesus’ exact words were prophesied hundreds of years before He uttered them. I can only imagine His anguish as He hung on the cross. Even though He knew the plan was to ensure our salvation, He cried out to His Father.

I do the same thing. When I am in distress, I cry out to God. When I am mourning, God is the one I turn to for comfort. When I’m hurting physically or emotionally, God is who I call to for help.

Jesus’ anguish was most intense when our sin was placed on Him. At that point He was separated from God because God cannot be in the presence of sin. Jesus had never been without His Father by His side. When we have sinned, we need to ask God’s forgiveness so that we can restore our relationship with Him.

Cry out to God when you need help. Call on Him to rescue you. His line is open 24/7 ... just for you and for me.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for always being ready and willing to help me and to forgive me. You are the Great Physician, my fortress, my shield, my comforter, my Savior, my everything! Create in me a clean heart, Lord, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. I need you. Amen.

PSALM 23

(NIVUK)

A Psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

March 31

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would suffer and die for the sins of others

“The fact is, it was our suffering he took on himself; he bore our pain. But we thought that God was punishing him, that God was beating him for something he did. But he was being punished for what we did. He was crushed because of our guilt. He took the punishment we deserved, and this brought us peace. We were healed because of his pain.” (Isaiah 53:4-5, ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8)

God often works in ways we don't expect. In this case, He sent His Son to die for all sinners. That's what I call love. Notice in the Romans passage it states, *“at just the right time.”* It's hard for us to remember that God's time is not the same as ours. God sees the big picture and we do not. We need to trust that He knows best.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:8-11)

God's ways are not the same as ours. His thoughts are not the same, either. But what God speaks will happen. What He wants to achieve will be accomplished. He wanted to bring us back to Himself, so He sent His Son to save the world.

Prayer: Oh, Lord, your ways are not the same as mine, nor are your thoughts. But I know that your ways and your timing are the best for me. Help me to not be anxious about anything, for you are with me. Amen.

April 1

The Old Testament Prophecy: No bones of the Messiah would be broken

“Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘These are the instructions for the Festival of Passover. No outsiders are allowed to eat the Passover meal. But any slave who has been purchased may eat it if he has been circumcised. Temporary residents and hired servants may not eat it. Each Passover lamb must be eaten in one house. Do not carry any of its meat outside, and do not break any of its bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate this Passover festival.’” (Exodus 12:43-46, NLT)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’” (John 19:31-36)

The Roman soldiers would break the legs of the men who were being crucified and who had not yet died. Hanging on a cross resulted in suffocation, but one could push against the cross with his legs to lift his body up so that he could breathe. If their legs were broken, they would die much sooner. It was a matter of timing.

The Jewish leaders didn’t want bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, so they were given instructions to break their legs. When they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so they didn’t have to break His legs. Prophecy fulfilled.

Prayer: Oh, Lord, it was the Festival of Passover. The whole community gathered to celebrate. They didn’t want to mar the landscape with dying men hanging on crosses. Help me to remember what you went through and how you must have felt. I am filled with gratitude for all the people who wrote the Books of the Bible and told us about the prophecies and how they were fulfilled. Bless them abundantly, Lord. Amen.

April 2

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be buried in a rich man's grave

“He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:9)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.” (Matthew 27:57-61)

Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council. He followed Jesus secretly because he was a religious leader. Jesus' other disciples had fled, so Joseph asked for Jesus' body. He came forward and did the right thing.

The tomb where Jesus was laid was most likely a cave carved out of one of the limestone hills in the area. It would have been large enough to walk into and, because it was carved out of rock on a hillside, it would have had only one entrance.

Jesus had predicted His death and Resurrection. The religious leaders were so afraid that it would happen the way Jesus predicted, so they instructed guards to be posted at the tomb. The guards sealed the large rock that had been rolled to cover the entrance to the tomb and stood guard day and night. That way, the only way the tomb could be empty would be that Jesus, indeed, rose from the dead.

Prayer: Lord, I'm grateful that Joseph took such care of your body. Thank you for protecting him from the Jewish leaders. You protect me, too, and I can feel your presence. Remain close, Lord. I don't know what's ahead. Amen.

April 3

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be resurrected

“Day and night I’ll stick with GOD; I’ve got a good thing going and I’m not letting go. I’m happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I’m firmly formed. You canceled my ticket to hell—that’s not my destination! Now you’ve got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face. Ever since you took my hand, I’m on the right way.” (Psalm 16:8-11, The MSG)

“But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself.” (Psalm 49:15)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.” (Mark 16:6)

“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.” (Acts 2:29-32)

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.” (1 John 3:16)

Jesus showed us how to love through His death and He showed us His power through His Resurrection.

The women, the disciples, and others were witnesses of Jesus’ Resurrection when He showed Himself to them. Even Thomas the doubter believed when Jesus showed him the wounds on His hands and feet and on His side where He had been pierced. We don’t have the opportunity to see His hands and feet, so ... do you believe?

Prayer: Christ Almighty, you showed your power when you rose from the dead! A sealed rock could not hold you in the tomb and the guards could not stop you. Your death and resurrection *“canceled my ticket to hell – that’s not my destination!”* I’m not letting go, either. I will cling to you for my salvation and to bring me into eternity. You arose – Hallelujah! Amen.

April 4

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would affect people throughout the world

“Here is my servant, the one I support. He is the one I have chosen, and I am very pleased with him. I have filled him with my Spirit, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not grow weak or give up until he has brought justice to the world. And people in faraway places will hope to receive his teachings.” (Isaiah 42:1, 4, ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus is the one God chose to bring justice to the nations in the Isaiah passage. Then Jesus invites us to go out into the world and preach the Good News of Jesus Christ in the Matthew passage.

One of my brothers-in-law worked for a company that translates Bibles. Yes, we are still translating Scripture so that people will be able to have a Bible in their own language. A lot of these places are in very remote areas. Some of these areas are very anti-Christian and the work is dangerous. On their website, this company describes what they hope to do; Transform Lives, Deepen Understanding, and Make Disciples.

That is what Jesus is calling us to do - to make disciples. Notice that after He gave the command, He assured us that He will be with us through it all.

Prayer: Holy One, help me to help you reach everyone who has not heard your Word. How personal it is to receive a Bible in your own language. I can't travel to far off places, but I can research different nonprofits who work to make disciples for you, and I can donate money and pray for their work and their safety. Guide me to make good decisions. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there I doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Francis of Assisi, Italy, 13TH Century

United Methodist Hymnal, #481

April 7

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be associated with a “new covenant” involving forgiveness of sin

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother saying, “Know the LORD,” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’ declares the LORD. ‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’” (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” (Heb 9:8-15)

Before Jesus, the only way to receive forgiveness of sins was through the high priest. The high priest was the only one who could enter the Most Holy Place into the immediate presence of God. He entered through a curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place only once a year to make atonement for the sins of all the people.

When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain in the temple was torn in two. *“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us has entered on our behalf.” (Hebrews 6:19-20a)* The veil had been opened and now our promised eternal inheritance is available to us.

Prayer: Holy One, my inheritance is eternal life with you. I didn’t earn it and I don’t deserve it. Jesus made it possible through His sacrifice. His grace and His love have covered all my sins, and I am forgiven. Praise the Lord! Amen.

April 8

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would see the results of His atoning death

“Still, it’s what GOD had in mind all along, to crush him with pain. The plan was that he give himself as an offering for sin so that he’d see life come from it—life, life, and more life. And GOD’s plan will deeply prosper through him. Out of that terrible travail of soul, he’ll see that it’s worth it and be glad he did it. Through what he experienced, my righteous one, my servant, will make many ‘righteous ones,’ as he himself carries the burden of their sins.

Therefore, I’ll reward him extravagantly—the best of everything, the highest honors—Because he looked death in the face and didn’t flinch, because he embraced the company of the lowest. He took on his own shoulders the sin of the many, he took up the cause of all the black sheep.”
(Isaiah 53:10-12, The MSG)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“So when they met together they asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”
(Acts 1:6-8)

In the Old Testament, people sacrificed animals to offer to God to atone for their sins. In the Isaiah passage, Jesus offered himself as the sacrifice for all our sins. Jesus is the Lamb that was slaughtered for our sakes, making us acceptable to God. By doing this, many people will become a family of believers who will become righteous by the Messiah’s sacrifice on the cross.

In the Acts passage, the disciples were asking Jesus when He was going to restore His kingdom. They didn’t realize that Jesus’ new kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly one.

I like what my Life Application Study Bible says about Acts 1:8: “Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary – that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.” So, be bold! Be courageous! Be confident and witness to others with Jesus’ authority! “Witnessing is not showing what we can do for God. It is showing and telling what God has done for us.” If you believe in Jesus, you have the power of the Holy Spirit!

Prayer: Holy Spirit, give me your power when I share my Jesus story with others. Help me to not go ahead of you, rather, you go ahead of me. In Jesus Name I pray, amen.

April 9

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would appeal to the Gentiles

“In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.” (Isaiah 11:10)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.” (Acts 13:47-48)

God had planned for Israel to be the light. Through Israel came Jesus, the light of the world. Jesus expanded His invitation and His ministry to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people). He wanted to bring salvation to **everyone!**

Now He has commanded us to go to the ends of the earth and proclaim eternal salvation is available to all who believe in Jesus Christ. We are to be His witnesses today. We don't have to go to China or Africa, we can witness to our neighbor across the fence or with the friend we walk with every morning. *“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”* (Luke 15:10) We need to share the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Have you ever witnessed to someone, and they accepted Jesus into their heart? It is a feeling like no other! Sometimes you won't know if someone has invited Jesus in or not. It may be months or years before you see an obvious sign. Sometimes you will never know. But Jesus knows **your** heart and that you were witnessing on His behalf. Keep going!

Prayer: Yes, Lord, send me. Help me to find the right people and the right words to say. Let me honor you with my witness to them. I pray that they will invite you into their heart to stay. I want to hear your angels rejoicing! Amen.

April 10

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah's sacrifice provides peace between man and God

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

"He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross." (Colossians 1:19-20 – The MSG)

Jesus knew that the time was near. He wanted to help His disciples understand what was going to happen and how they should go on without Him. As they were sharing their last meal together, Jesus broke the bread, lifted the cup, and gave thanks to God. He told His friends that the bread represented His body and the cup His blood; blood of a new covenant that would forgive their sins. The disciples didn't understand what He was talking about then, but they would recall it later.

Jesus was crucified so that our sins would be forgiven. We are healed and made right with God because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. When we participate in Holy Communion, when we take a piece of bread and a cup of grape juice, we remember Jesus' words to His disciples so many years ago. Jesus is the New Covenant and He wants us to enjoy a full life in communion with God. We are acceptable to God and Jesus made it possible. He reconciled us to God by shedding His blood. He was the perfect sacrifice.

Prayer: Oh, Lord, when I take Communion, I remember your love for me. I remember what you told your disciples long ago about being the New Covenant. Help me to be eternally amazed at your sacrifice for me. Amazing Grace – that is what you have offered. I accept. In your Holy and precious Name I pray, Amen.

April 11

The Old Testament Prophecy: Jesus brings hope for the hopeless

“Take a good look at my servant. I’m backing him to the hilt. He’s the one I chose, and I couldn’t be more pleased with him. I’ve bathed him with my Spirit, my life. He’ll set everything right among the nations. He won’t call attention to what he does with loud speeches or gaudy parades. He won’t brush aside the bruised and the hurt and he won’t disregard the small and insignificant, but he’ll steadily and firmly set things right. He won’t tire out and quit. He won’t be stopped until he’s finished his work—to set things right on earth. Far-flung ocean islands wait expectantly for his teaching.” (Isaiah 42:1-4, The MSG)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Meanwhile in Capernaum, there was a certain official from the king’s court whose son was sick. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and asked that he come down and heal his son, who was on the brink of death. Jesus put him off: ‘Unless you people are dazzled by a miracle, you refuse to believe.’ But the court official wouldn’t be put off. ‘Come down! It’s life or death for my son.’ Jesus simply replied, ‘Go home. Your son lives.’ The man believed the bare word Jesus spoke and headed home. On his way back, his servants intercepted him and announced, ‘Your son lives!’ He asked them what time he began to get better. They said, ‘The fever broke yesterday afternoon at one o’clock.’ The father knew that that was the very moment Jesus had said, ‘Your son lives.’ That settled it. Not only he but his entire household believed.” (John 4:46b-54a, MSG)

We are given hope through the Scriptures. In the Old Testament passage from Isaiah, God Himself gave us a vivid description of Jesus’ being and character. We understand what His mission is, and we can trust that He will complete it.

The story from the Gospel of John reminds us of lessons we need to learn or remember. When the King’s official needed help, he went to Jesus. He believed that Jesus could heal his son who was dying. The official believed that Jesus was the Messiah when he realized that Jesus had healed his son at the exact time that the son’s fever broke. Because Jesus had performed this miracle for them, the entire family gave their lives to Him. They believed because they experienced Jesus’ power to save their son.

Our church gives hope through our Matthew 25 Food Giveaways. People who come through regularly share with us parts of their stories. Some of them consider Coon Rapids UMC to be ‘my church’. Several people who have been recipients of the food have started volunteering and that’s a beautiful thing! God is changing lives.

Prayer: Holy Lord, you have changed me, too. Your hands brought me from a young woman who couldn’t say her own name in front of a group to becoming a leader. Thank you for your faithfulness to me. I continue to hope in you. Amen.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

Ecumenical Version

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

* universal

April 13 – (Palm Sunday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would bring salvation to the ends of the earth

“And now he [the Lord] says, “You are a very important servant to me. You must bring back to me the tribes of Jacob. You must bring back the people of Israel who are still alive. But I have something else for you to do that is even more important: I will make you a light for the other nations. You will show people all over the world the way to be saved.” (Isaiah 49:6, ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“This is what the Lord told us to do: ‘I have made you a light for the other nations, to show people all over the world the way to be saved.’ When the non-Jewish people heard Paul say this, they were happy. They gave honor to the message of the Lord, and many of them believed it. These were the ones chosen to have eternal life.” (Acts 13:47-48, ERV)

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.” (Titus 2:11-12)

God sent Jesus on a mission: To bring the people of Israel back to Him. But then He goes even further. He wants Him to go to the Gentiles (the non-Jewish people) also. Yes, we gentiles are also invited to be part of God’s family.

When we believe in Jesus, our lives change. We are forgiven and we are clean from sin. To remain that way, we need to say ‘no’ to old desires, stay away from people who will get us into trouble, and be the best person we can be. We try to live the way Jesus lived. And then we need to pass it on. Tell others about Jesus and how believing in Him has made a difference in your life.

Prayer: Almighty One, you have made me a light to lead others to you. You have given me what I need for this mission. I know I can count on you to give me the words to say when the time is right. Let me be the light in someone’s darkness. In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen.

April 14 – (Holy Monday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah is the Great I AM

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the People of Israel and I tell them, ‘The God of your fathers sent me to you’; and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What do I tell them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I-AM-WHO-I-AM. Tell the People of Israel, ‘I-AM sent me to you.’ God continued with Moses: ‘This is what you’re to say to the Israelites: “GOD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob sent me to you.” This has always been my name, and this is how I always will be known. (Exodus 3:13-15, The MSG)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you—I am he.’” (John 4:25-26)

“‘You are not yet fifty years old,’ the Jews said to him, ‘and you have seen Abraham!’ ‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.” (John 8:57-59)

God is very clear with Moses; He said His name is I AM. In Moses’ time (1500 B.C.), there were many gods and they all had different names. Moses wanted to know God’s name so that he could tell the people who had sent him. God replied, *“I AM.”*

The seven I AM statements in the Gospel of John that we are most familiar with are:

- I AM the bread of life (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51) Bread nourishes our body and God nourishes our soul.
- I AM the light of the world (John 8:12) Our world is lost in darkness, but God guides us with His light.
- I AM the door (John 10:7, 9) God protects us from evil like a shepherd protects his sheep from wolves.
- I AM the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14) Jesus watches over all who believe in Him.
- I AM the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) Jesus’ death and resurrection has overcome death.
- I AM the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6) Jesus is the source of all truth and knowledge about God.
- I AM the true vine (John 15:1, 5) When we follow Jesus, we are like a branch that is attached to a vine. We get our nourishment through the vine and that keeps us alive so that we can bear fruit to honor God.

The I AM statements teach us the truth about the Holy One’s identity and character.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8) Moses’ God is the same God throughout the Bible and in our lives today. Our God is unchanging.

Prayer: Oh, God, you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. The concept is hard for me to understand. Infinity – forever – unchanging; none of which I am. You always have been I AM. One day I will understand. Amen.

April 15 – (Holy Tuesday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah will send the Spirit of God

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” (Isaiah 44:3)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because people do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” (John 16:7-13)

God promised to pour out His Spirit on us. We are the descendants. Jesus let His disciples know that He was going away, but that He would send the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, to be with them. The Spirit would be an advocate, a counselor, a helper who would lead them to the truth. These are the truths that they wrote down and their writings became the books of the New Testament.

Jesus was going away; He would be crucified and not be on this earth any longer. Instead, He would be going to heaven to be with His Father. But He wouldn't leave them alone. Jesus doesn't leave us alone, either. He has sent His Holy Spirit to live within each of His believers to help us discern right from wrong.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for the Holy Spirit revealing truths about you to the disciples who, in turn, wrote them into what is now the Bible. I pray that I can be like the disciples and share the truth of who you are with others. I pray this in Jesus' Holy Name, Amen.

April 16 – (Holy Wednesday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah will be highly exalted

“In my vision at night I [Daniel] looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13-14)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.” (Ephesians 1:19b-22)

When Jesus was taken from the cross, His disciples thought that was the end. The man who had led them, had taught them, had shown them how to live, and had blessed them was dead. His body had been put into a tomb. The women had prepared his body for burial with spices and had wrapped Him with strips of cloth. He was gone.

In Daniel’s vision, he saw *“one like a son of man,”* in other words, a human being ... Jesus. He was brought before God and *“given authority, glory, and complete ruling power. People from every nation and language group will serve him. His rule will last forever. His kingdom will continue forever. It will never be destroyed.”* (Daniel 7:14, ERV) Jesus was *“coming with the clouds of heaven.”* In my Life Application Bible, it explains that in the Bible clouds “represent His majesty and awesome presence.”

He was gone. What would happen now? They had no idea what they would experience next.

Prayer: Holy God, when Jesus died, it was not the end, it was only the beginning. You gave Him all authority and ruling power along with glory. I look forward to the day He returns, riding on the clouds. I will recognize His majesty and awesome presence! Amen.

April 17 – (Maundy Thursday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah would be seated at the right hand of God

“The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” (Psalm 110:1)

“The Lord is at your right hand.” (Psalm 110:5a)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ ‘Yes, it is as you say;’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” (Matthew 26:63-64)

“‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:8-11)

In Mark 10:35-45, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, ask Jesus to let one of them sit at his right and the other at his left. Jesus tells them that they don't understand what they are asking. James and John thought the new kingdom would be on earth. They thought Jesus was going to overcome Rome because that's how it is predicted in the Old Testament. James and John wanted honored places in Jesus' new Kingdom. Jesus explains that it is God's decision who takes the seats of honor in Heaven. Jesus didn't shame them or laugh at them, but He said 'no' to their requests. Jesus is the only one to be seated at God's right hand.

Prayer: Oh Lord, like James and John, there are many things I don't understand. I will continue to study the Bible, continue to serve others, and continue to worship you. Keep guiding me, Lord, closer to you. Amen.

April 18 – (Good Friday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah is the First and the Last

“Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.” (Isaiah 48:12-13)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.’” (Revelation 1:8, 17-18)

My Life Application study Bible gives us this understanding: “Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The Lord God is the beginning and the end. God the Father is the eternal Lord and ruler of the past, present, and future. Without Him you have nothing that is eternal, nothing that can change your life, nothing that can save you from sin. Is the Lord your reason for living, ‘the Alpha and the Omega’ of your life? Honor the One who is the beginning and the end of all existence, wisdom, and power.”

John is the one writing the book of Revelation. At this time, the Roman government was persecuting Christians and I’m sure John wondered if the church would survive what the Roman government was throwing at them. But then Jesus came to John and assured him that he could count on God’s strength to help him overcome his persecutors. And guess what? The church is still here!

The power that was available to John is available to us, too. The Alpha and the Omega was, is, and is to come. God is with us and willing to help us fight our battles. Just call on His Name.

Prayer: Holy One, you are the beginning and end of every good thing. Thank you for your faithfulness to me throughout my life. I am assured that I can always count on your wisdom and power when I am experiencing difficult problems. Thank you for helping John and thank you for helping me. Amen

April 19 – (Holy Saturday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: To establish a kingdom that will never end

“His power will continue to grow, and there will be peace without end. This will establish him as the king sitting on David’s throne and ruling his kingdom. He will rule with goodness and justice forever and ever. The strong love that the LORD All-Powerful has for his people will make this happen!” (Isaiah 9:7, ERV)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“Listen! You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus. He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God, and the Lord God will make him king like his ancestor David. He will rule over the people of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:31-33, ERV)

Jesus hanging on a cross. His disciples, all His followers, are wondering what is happening. Jesus, sentenced to death. He hadn’t done anything wrong, but they are crucifying Him. Has following Him all this time been for nothing? What is going to happen now that their teacher is gone?

What the disciples don’t understand yet is that this is all part of God’s plan. His Son will be resurrected in three days, will come to them and show them His wounds, will ascend into the heavenly realms and will be their King for eternity! All they must do is continue to believe in Him as their Savior.

Prayer: Lord, when times are tough and everything looks dark and I am in despair, help me to remember that you are with me ... always! In good times and bad. Give me your comfort and peace when I need it most. And when you come back as you have promised, I will experience your Everlasting Kingdom! You will come with Power, Peace, and Love and make everything right. Hallelujah! Your Kingdom will never end! Amen and amen!

April 20 – (Easter Sunday)

The Old Testament Prophecy: The Messiah is from everlasting to everlasting

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” (Micah 5:2)

The New Testament Fulfillment:

“So Christ was offered as a sacrifice one time to take away the sins of many people. And he will come a second time, but not to offer himself for sin. He will come the second time to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” (Hebrews 9:28)

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (Revelation 22:12-13)

Christ is infinity. He was the beginning and will be the end. He always has been. Again, it is hard for us humans to understand. Everything in our world, including our being, has a beginning and an end. Then Jesus came into this world as a baby born in a cave to humble parents, a young Mary and Joseph who was a carpenter. Jesus' life on this earth had a beginning and an end, because He was human.

When He sacrificed Himself on the cross to save us from our sins, He rose three days later and returned to sit at the right hand of God His Father. Our hope as Christians lies in the truth that He is coming back. He will come to restore this world back to the Garden of Eden – perfection. This is His promise: *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ He said to me [John]: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.’”* (Revelation 21:3-6) Hallelujah!

Prayer: Almighty God, all I can do is praise you and shout, “Hallelujah!” God had the perfect plan to defeat sin and death and restore all of us to perfection. We can be all together for eternity with no more sin, no more pain, no more tears, and no more death. Thank you, Lord, **Our Salvation Has Come!** Amen.

John 3:16-21

For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him
shall not perish but have eternal life.
For God did not send his Son into the world
to condemn the world,
but to save the world through him.
Whoever believes in him is not condemned,
but whoever does not believe
stands condemned already
because he has not believed
in the name of God's one and only Son.

This is the verdict:
Light has come into the world,
but people loved darkness instead of light
because their deeds were evil.
Everyone who does evil hates the light,
and will not come into the light
for fear that their deeds will be exposed.
But whoever lives by the truth
comes into the light,
so that it may be seen plainly
that what they have done
has been done through God.

Eastertide

Beginning on Easter Sunday and running through Pentecost Sunday is the seven-week period called the Easter season or Eastertide within the United Methodist Church. It is a time for reflecting on the power of the Resurrection and the personal transformation which results.

The Preparation for Worship is found in the Book of Common Prayer which sets the tone for the next seven weeks following Easter:

Blessed are you, Lord God of our salvation,
to you be praise and glory forever.

As once you led your people through the waters
from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land,
now you have delivered us from the dominion of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your beloved Son.

*Rising from death, he has destroyed death
And opened to us the gate of everlasting life.
May we, the first fruits of your new creation,
Rejoice in this new day you have made
And praise you for your mighty acts.*

*Blessed be God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
Blessed be God forever.*

Happy Eastertide everyone!

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