

LENT 2025

Unbroken:

A living faith

Spiritual Practices and Reflections



by Ellie Roscher and Joe Davis



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Written and Developed by Ellie Roscher and Joe Davis

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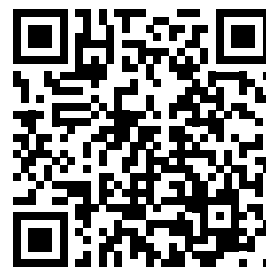
Opening Note:

Each week you'll have the chance to connect your community with a spiritual practice that engages the worship theme and Living Catechism teaching. There will be one video per week that introduces the practice and then the five entries to help people enter the practice in a new way.

Week 1



By Ellie Roscher



Scan with your phone camera to watch the video for this week.

God speaks to us through Scripture and Spirit

God speaks to us through ancient stories, evocative poetry, fiery prophecy, and intimate correspondence. The Bible has been handed down from generation to generation, carefully translated and boldly interpreted, so that we might open it and hear good news. And God is still speaking, as we gather together to ponder these stories anew, encounter wisdom from traditions different from our own, or wrestle with a message preached into contemporary life.

Day One:

God speaks to us through ancient stories

God is speaking to you through whispers and wails, through the wind and the waves, through strangers and loved ones. Lent is a beautiful time to quiet ourselves and listen. Begin your spiritual practice today with intentional listening. Find a comfortable place to

sit and create a shape with your body that is alert and calm. Take some light movement, maybe rocking, swaying, or taking some slow neck rolls or shoulder circles. Then move toward stillness, eventually shutting down your eyes or taking a soft gaze inward. Listen to

the sounds in the room. Then listen to the sound of your breath, noticing the cadence of your inhales and exhales. Then allow your exhales to bring your awareness into your body and for several moments listen to what your body is communicating to you.

Today, notice how God is speaking to you through stories. We are swimming in stories that are rich and offer meaning. Stories remind us of where we came from and how we are interconnected. They can present messy, beautiful truth in a way that facts do not. They bring us back to ourselves and hold us in the web of creation, including our ancestors and descendants.

Choose a story, biblical or not. Don't overthink your choice, just notice what story rises to the surface. The stories that are important to you have accompanied you for a reason. If none come to mind, think of a picture book you loved as a child. Ask, "God who speaks through story, what truth are you inviting me to remember today?" Ponder the story anew. If you have the time, read the story with an open mind and heart. If not, simply reflect on the story you hold and notice what parts of the story are shimmering with God's voice. What good news might the story carry for you today?

Day Two:

God speaks to us through evocative poetry

God is speaking to you through whispers and wails, through the wind and the waves, through strangers and loved ones. Lent is a beautiful time to quiet ourselves and listen. Begin your spiritual practice today with intentional listening. Find a comfortable place to sit and create a shape with your body that is alert and calm. Take some light movement, maybe rocking, swaying, or taking some slow neck rolls or shoulder circles. Then move toward stillness, eventually shutting down your eyes

or taking a soft gaze inward. Listen to the sounds in the room. Then listen to the sound of your breath, noticing the cadence of your inhales and exhales. Then allow your exhales to bring your awareness into your body and for several moments listen to what your body is communicating to you.

Today, notice how God is speaking to you through poetry. Poetry has a beautiful, mysterious way of putting words to the unexplainable nature of loss, love,

death, joy, grieving, life, creation, transformation, and resurrection. Poems remind us to ingest beauty in our days. Poetry can shake the dust off our souls and invite us to look at the world again with wonder, tenderness, and awe so we can stay awake and alive in our often mundane and ordinary days.

Choose a Psalm or a more contemporary poem that you love. If none come to mind, try the poem of the day at poets.org. Before you read it, ask God to speak to you through the poem, and read it with your eyes, ears, heart, and mind open to God's good news. There is beauty all around us. Can you sense God's Spirit in the poem you are living today?

Day Three:

God speaks to us through fiery prophecy

God is speaking to you through whispers and wails, through the wind and the waves, through strangers and loved ones. Lent is a beautiful time to quiet ourselves and listen. Begin your spiritual practice today with intentional listening. Find a comfortable place to sit and create a shape with your body that is alert and calm. Take some light movement, maybe rocking, swaying, or taking some slow neck rolls or shoulder circles. Then move toward stillness, eventually shutting down your eyes or taking a soft gaze inward. Listen to the sounds in the room. Then listen to the sound of your breath, noticing the cadence of your inhales and exhales. Then allow your exhales to bring your awareness into your body and for several moments listen to what your body is communicating to you.

God loves us enough to fight for us, to call us back home, to invite us to live out

of love rather than fear and abundance rather than scarcity. At times, we need a wakeup call, and God speaks to us through ancient and modern-day prophets. Lent is a season to reflect on the ways we have strayed and listen to the prophets who are calling us to turn back toward the good news.

Today, reflect on how you feel far away from God and the bounty of God. Allow the prophets to reveal God's voice of unconditional love speaking truth to worldly power. Musicians and comedians often tell hard truths in a way that wakes us up and invites us to repent. Choose a Bible chapter from one of the books of the prophets or choose a song or comedy bit that speaks hard, enlivening, anti-empire truth to you. Listen for God's voice seeping through. What is one tiny thing you can do today, to take a step back toward the speaking God?

Day Four:

God speaks to us through intimate correspondence

God is speaking to you through whispers and wails, through the wind and the waves, through strangers and loved ones. Lent is a beautiful time to quiet ourselves and listen. Begin your spiritual practice today with intentional listening. Find a comfortable place to sit and create a shape with your body that is alert and calm. Take some light movement, maybe rocking, swaying, or taking some slow neck rolls or shoulder circles. Then move toward stillness, eventually shutting down your eyes or taking a soft gaze inward. Listen to the sounds in the room. Then listen to the sound of your breath, noticing the cadence of your inhales and exhales. Then allow your exhales to bring your awareness into your body and for several moments listen to what your body is communicating to you.

Our days are filled with correspondence like texts, emails, and brief exchanges with loved ones and strangers. In a society that values speed, efficiency, productivity, and optimization, all too

often our days are so packed and rushed we speed through these exchanges, missing an opportunity for closeness and nourishment. It is possible now to have the screen of our phones be the first and last thing we look at and touch in our days even if we are surrounded by people and creatures we love dearly. How, on a day when I send dozens of texts and emails, can I end up feeling lonely at times? What if we were to view these moments of connection as intimate correspondence and an opportunity to grow closer to God, ourselves, and each other?

Today, read one of Paul's letters in the Bible or a piece of correspondence from your day intentionally listening for God speaking through them. What if God is speaking through these exchanges and calling you to deeper, more meaningful connections? Can you turn toward your correspondences today not with speed but with attention and care, not just skimming over them but really listening?

Day Five:

God speaks good news to us today

God is speaking to you through whispers and wails, through the wind and the waves, through strangers and loved ones. Lent is a beautiful time to quiet ourselves and listen. Begin your spiritual practice today with intentional listening. Find a comfortable place to sit and create a shape with your body that is alert and calm. Take some light movement, maybe rocking, swaying, or taking some slow neck rolls or shoulder circles. Then move toward stillness, eventually shutting down your eyes or taking a soft gaze inward. Listen to the sounds in the room. Then listen to the sound of your breath, noticing the cadence of your inhales and exhales. Then allow your exhales to bring your awareness into your body and for several moments listen to what your body is communicating to you.

If we look at the news headlines closely, we see how the media machine is feeding societal divisiveness and how divisiveness leads to more media. If we are not vigilant, attentive, and discerning,

the fast, ever-present and ever-spinning news cycle can grow our sense of isolation, exhaustion, powerlessness, and despair. It is so easy to only hear the bad news. We have to listen closely with ears of faith to hear God speaking the good news meant for us.

We can choose who we are listening to. This week we have chosen to listen to God speaking through storytellers, poets, prophets, and writers of intimate correspondence in and outside the Bible. We find what we are looking for. Today, can you look for God speaking good news to you? God is speaking through nature, music, art, laughter, affection, pets, children, strangers, marginalized people, and acts of healing. God is speaking through small, courageous acts of kindness and love. Listen for God speaking good news to you today, maybe in the most unexpected places. At the end of your day, name three places you heard God speaking good news, and may your prayer be a simple, "Thank you." This lent, keep listening. God is speaking through Scripture and Spirit to make all things new.

Week 2



By Joe Davis



Scan with your phone camera to watch the video for this week.

God becomes human for us in Jesus Christ

The God who creates all that is takes on life and death in the person of Jesus. A God who becomes flesh understands our loves and limits, bridging the gap between God and creation through God's radical act of love for creation in Christ's living, dying, and living again. God's costly love for creation compels us to embrace Christ's compassion and care for all of life.

Read:

John 1:1-5.

Further reflection:

God is Within Us Poem (By Joe Davis).

God is...

God...

Is...

With...

In...

Us.

The source of all light and life and love, the lifeblood of the universe: the one word, to one chapter to one verse to birth heaven and earth, before and after, the first breath to stretch across a bridge from a dark abyss to impart a kiss pressed against the empty lips of existence:

God...
Is...
With...
In...
Us.

Beyond the lips,
beyond the script,
beyond description
of words and worlds.

An awestruck wonder
underneath the involuntary movement
of heart or blood or lungs or
every secret change whispered down
the infinite ear of mystery:

God...
Is...
With...
In...
Us.

Day 1

Practice listening for God in the scriptures

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. This goodness is living and breathing through Christ, through stories old and new, and even through you and me. Take some time to read your favorite scripture or a sacred text of your choice and write down all of the goodness or “Good News” you can find.

How does this Good News shape you and your life? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

How does this Good News shape the lives of those close to you? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

How does this Good News shape the lives of those far from you? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share some of this Good News with someone throughout the week.

Day 2

Practice listening for God in your body

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to relax your body and listen to your breath as if it is the breath of God slowly and gently moving through you from head to toe. Write what feelings and sensations emerge. It may help to close your eyes and place your hands over your heart or your belly.

What goodness can you affirm in your body? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

What goodness can you affirm in the bodies of those around you? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

What goodness can you affirm in the bodies of those far from you? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share some of this Good News with someone throughout the week.

Day 3

Practice listening for God in the collective stories from groups of people and throughout your community

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to connect with the stories of those you

are in community with. This can be through an in-person conversation, text, phone call, Facetime or Zoom, etc.

What goodness can you affirm in their body? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

What goodness can you affirm in the bodies of those they are connected with? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

What goodness can you affirm in the bodies of those they may be distanced from? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share some of this Good News with someone throughout the week.

Day 4

Practice listening for God in culture

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to engage with cultural expressions that are similar or different from your own. This can be through books, films, theater, coffee shops, faith spaces, shopping centers, community hubs, etc.

What goodness can you affirm in this culture? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

What goodness can you affirm in other interconnected cultures? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

What goodness can you affirm in cultures that may seem distant or

different? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Give your body what it needs. If you need touch, try soothing, massaging, or rubbing.

If you need movement, try stretching, twisting, dancing, exercising.

If you need sound, try humming, singing, or shouting.

Always remember to breathe. Explore creative ways to share some of this Good News with someone throughout the week.

Day 5

Practice listening for God in nature

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to immerse yourself in nature. This can be through a walk around your neighborhood or local park, gardening, hiking, outdoor sports, sunbathing, swimming, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, etc.

What goodness can you notice in nature? Say a prayer of gratitude for this goodness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share some of this Good News with someone throughout the week.

Week 3



By Ellie Roscher



Scan with your phone camera to watch the video for this week.

God Feels Our Pain and Suffering

God becoming human in Jesus means God is deeply familiar with the pain and suffering of body, mind, and spirit. Jesus' experiences of loneliness, sorrow, and betrayal alongside the pain of physical violence and death reveal that God suffers with and for us and all of God's beloved creation. And it is in resurrection that God declares that divine love seeks to transform all that threatens to destroy that which God created.

Day One:

God feels both our pain and suffering

There once was a young man in the process of becoming a monk. He was required to live in the wild for 100 days, and three times a day, he had to dump a bucket of freezing water over himself. He dreaded the ice baths more and more each day until anticipating them

was all he could think about. They were breaking him. He decided to give up at the end of the day and go back to his old life, and he felt great relief. Knowing it was his last ice bath, he turned all his attention toward it, really experiencing the cold, and in his attentiveness, he

realized it was not as bad as he was telling himself it was. There was extreme sensation in his body, yes, but it was temporary and passed quickly. The suffering resided in the story he was telling himself about the discomfort. When he could drop the story and experience the sensations fully, the baths became manageable. He decided to stay in the woods and finish his training, turning toward each ice bath with curiosity and attentiveness.

Sometimes we tell ourselves stories about how our pain brings great suffering. Sometimes we believe God is causing the pain as punishment, or choosing to not take it away, or that we deserve the pain. It helps me to remember that in our creation story, Adam and Eve suffer in the garden before they sin. There is suffering

that comes along with being human. God is God and we are not, and when we face our limitations and mortality, it hurts. We get sick. Our bones break. We harm ourselves and others. We live in systems that oppress some more than others. We crave connection and feel lonely.

Jesus experienced both pain and suffering in his life and death. In our moments of pain and suffering, God sits with us with deep compassion and knowing. Today, before you practice your loving kindness meditation, write down a few of your pains and the stories you tell yourself about those pains. Ask God to sit with you in it, and in God holding your stories, see if that offers you the ability to let go of the story a bit and recognize your ability to sit with your pain.

Day Two:

God feels our mental and emotional pain and suffering

I have heard it said that there are no casseroles delivered when you get a mental health diagnosis. We are learning more and more about mental and emotional health, but as a society we still have a lot of catching up to do when it comes to sitting with people in mental and emotional pain

and suffering. Too often folks living with depression, anxiety, or other mental health pain feel isolated and forgotten. Too often folks navigating the stress and suffering of things like financial insecurity, job loss, divorce, or ambiguous loss feel deeply lonely and abandoned. Sometimes those

folks are us. Too often our society centers and celebrates a certain kind of strength associated with productivity, efficiency, optimization, financial abundance, emotional positivity, material surplus, and professional thriving, making the rest of us feel invalid and sidelined. The pain is plenty, but the isolation that comes with the pain adds to the suffering.

In Jesus' ministry, we see him using peripheral vision. He looks to the outskirts of society and gets closer to the people who have been shunned for being misunderstood. Instead of distancing himself from folks suffering from mental and emotional anguish, he gets closer to them and shows deep compassion. We also see

Jesus experiencing his own mental and emotional pain and suffering. When his friend dies, he weeps. When he sees injustice, he flips tables. When he needs his friends, they fall asleep. When we are suffering and feeling alone, then we can know deeply that God understands and desires to be nearby.

Today, before you practice your loving kindness meditation, write down a few ways you are struggling mentally and emotionally. Reflect on who in your life is struggling mentally and emotionally and how they might be feeling alone. Ask God to sit with you and them in the pain and suffering, trusting that God can bring glimpses of resurrection with God's compassionate and knowing presence.

Day Three:

God feels our physical pain and suffering

God became flesh and took on a body. We believe that Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine. It is such a slippery, mysterious idea, that Christians over the centuries have tried to deny it. Believing Jesus was fully human is believing that God got sick, God got sore, God felt the physical agony of being crucified, and that God died. It's evocative to think of God

as experiencing the limitations of the human body, especially because in our society we center and prioritize bodies that are strong, healthy, able, and well.

God is God and we are not. Every day we experience the physical limitations of our human bodies and feel pain and suffering. We ache, we break, we get exhausted, we get sick. And in a

society that draws a line between the sick and the well, all too often shoving the sick, injured, and differently abled, aging bodies to the sidelines, we can tell ourselves stories about our physical pain that brings extra layers of suffering. We can feel like we are not enough when our bodies hold us back from being efficient and productive, which are only two ways of being contributing members of society, but too often the ways that seem to unfairly outweigh others.

It helps to turn to the Gospels, where Jesus compassionately approaches people in physical pain. When the world banishes folks with withered hands and leprosy, women bleeding

for years and daughters stuck in beds, Jesus draws near. He relieves not just physical pain but the pain of being judged and sent away to suffer alone. Instead of ignoring their pain, he sits with them in it.

Today, before you practice your loving kindness meditation, write down a few ways you are struggling physically, experiencing the limitations of your human body. Reflect on who in your life is struggling physically and how they might be feeling alone. Ask God to sit with you and them in the pain and suffering, remembering that in God's eyes, there is strength in weakness and deep love for the most vulnerable.

Day Four:

God feels our spiritual pain and suffering

What is my work to do in the world? Why do some people seem to face so much more pain and suffering than others? Why do we die? What can I do to address oppression and acts of hatred and violence? Does this life matter? Do I matter? Big, daunting spiritual questions can loom underneath the surface, whispering to us in our busy, small, mundane lives. With constant access to our phones and the relentless, divisive news cycle,

the problems in the world can seem insurmountable, leaving us feeling disempowered and filled with despair. Grieving and tending to our spiritual pain and suffering takes time and care, and we can neglect our spiritual well being if we are not feeling connected to a supportive spiritual community.

Today, we can take a few moments and acknowledge our spiritual pain and suffering. We can remember that

God meets us in our spiritual pain and suffering. God rocks us, wails with us, and grieves with us. We can call to mind the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, in a moment of spiritual darkness, begging God to take away what he knew he had to do. It was a moment of spiritual pain when he admitted that he did not want to die. Or the moment on the cross when he calls out to God, feeling abandoned in his moment of agony and ultimately death. God made flesh knows betrayal, fear, loneliness, and abandonment.

He can sit with us when we feel spiritually lost, weary, and forsaken.

Before you practice your loving kindness meditation, write down a few ways you are struggling spiritually. What big questions are you living with under the surface? What does your doubt center around? Reflect on who in your life is struggling spiritually and how they might be feeling alone. Ask God to sit with you and them in the pain and suffering, remembering that your grief and doubt is important to God, too.

Day Five:

God transforms our pain and suffering through resurrection

In Lent we are asked to believe the unbelievable. We are asked to believe that Jesus died, really died all the way, that he stayed dead for three days, and then was raised from the dead, resurrected. God took on flesh and suffered with and for us. God loves all of creation so much that God took on pain, suffering, and death to transform it. In resurrection God declares that divine love has the last word. Divine love transforms death. All that God created cannot ultimately be destroyed.

There are days when it can be easy to choose fear, isolation, exhaustion, and despair. It is understandable to dwell in overwhelm and get stuck there. We can go days without looking up at the sky or listening to the sound of our own breath or pondering all it took to bring a piece of bread in our homes. We can look at nature and pets and children and forget that there could have been nothing but instead there is something, and that something is very good. God's creation is very good. Today, what if we look for tiny

ways to multiply hope, connection, rest, and love. What if we look again and see the little resurrections all around us? Each morning is a gift. Each breath is a fresh start. There is an opportunity to do the work of repair in our relationships. To join the ongoing work of the community to bring life. To reach out to folks who may feel alone, to support folks who feel vulnerable. We can love ourselves and each other like it is our jobs, our prayerful answer to the gift of life.

Before you practice your loving kindness meditation, write down a few instances of little resurrections you have witnessed lately. Take a moment to thank God for constantly working to transform death into life so that all of God's beloved creations can thrive. Name one small way you can enter in and join the ongoing work of transformation in your body, your relationships, and your community.

Week 4



By Joe Davis



Scan with your phone camera to watch the video for this week.

God compels creation towards mercy

God's merciful nature is preoccupied with graciousness rather than punishment or who deserves love and care and who doesn't. That we are created in the image of a merciful God means we are called to embody unconditional grace and love to other people and all living things, participating in the coming of God's reign where all are supported, nourished, and loved.

Read Luke 15:11-32, The Lost Son Who Was Found

Reflect on times in your life when you felt like a lost child.
How is God's grace able to find us?

*There's no grace period.
Only grace, period.*

Original poems for additional reflection

Bless The Earth > Page 22

Grace is Like an Ocean > Page 26

Day 1:

Practice listening for God in the scriptures

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. This goodness is living and breathing through Christ, through stories old and new, and even through you and me. Take some time to read your favorite scripture or a sacred text of your choice and write down all the ways you see God's loving grace and mercy overcome guilt, shame, and punishment.

How does this expression of grace and mercy shape you and your life? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

How does this expression of grace and mercy shape the lives of those close to you? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

How does this expression of grace and mercy shape the lives of those far from you? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share grace with someone throughout the week. Even if that someone is yourself.

Day 2:

Practice listening for grace in your body

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to relax your body and listen to your breath as if it is the breath of God slowly and gently moving through you from head to toe. Write what feelings

and sensations emerge. It may help to close your eyes and place your hands over your heart or your belly.

How can you offer more grace to your body? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

What grace can you offer to the bodies of those around you? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

What grace can you offer to the bodies of those far from you? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share grace with someone throughout the week. Even if that someone is yourself.

Bless the Earth

*If a flower isn't growing,
don't curse the flower,
bless the earth—*

*water the roots,
soften the dirt,
tend to the wounds,
help heal the hurt,*

*life grows when blessed,
not when it's cursed—
can we create the needed
environment first?*

No fruit stolen by birds
or wriggling worms,
no seeds choked by prisons
of thistles and thorns,
no sun-parched petals
withered and scorn,
no stems cut short since
the day they were born,
no leaves and roots torn
before fully formed—
but a refuge, a haven,
a home safe from harm.

Don't blame the bloomless
for droughts with no rain,
don't shame the shriveled
left out in the shade,
don't guilt the wilted,
instead ease their pain—
help them find shelter for
when seasons change.

The rejected and abandoned
become celebrated,
when we see the sacred
in the desecrated,
when we remove all that robs
God's breathe
we all breathe more deeply
in the process.

*If a flower isn't growing,
don't curse the flower,
bless the earth—
water the roots,
soften the dirt,
tend to the wounds,
help heal the hurt,*

*life grows when blessed,
not when it's cursed—
can we create the needed
environment first?*

If the seeds are our children
what gardens are we building?
Does the soil that surround us
help heal them or kill them?

If the seeds are our children
what gardens are we building?
One with sunlight and water
and proper nutrition?

Can we create the conditions
for a world without prisons
so their dreams and visions
can reach full fruition?

No handcuffs or shackles,
no chains or cages,
no miseducation
like slaves on plantations.

If the seeds are our children,
how do we raise them
in spaces of love, compassion,
and patience,

replacing degradation
with more graciousness?

When the soil's cultivated
we change relationships:

Nothing grows
when the soil is bad;
all life grows
when the soil is good.

We bless our children—
and all those living—
when we help heal
the whole neighborhood.

*If a child isn't growing,
don't curse the child,
bless the earth—*

*If at home, school,
or in the church,
tend to their wounds,
help heal their hurt,*

*life grows when blessed,
not when it's cursed—
let's create the needed
environment first.*

Day 3:

Practice listening for grace in the collective stories of people throughout your community

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to connect with the sacred stories of those you are in community with. This can be through an in-person conversation, text, phone call, Facetime or Zoom, etc.

Where can you see expressions of grace in community? If you can't see any, where can more grace be offered? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

Where can you see expressions of grace in other interconnected

communities? If you can't see any, where can more grace be offered? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

Where can you see expressions of grace in different or distant communities? If you can't see any, where can more grace be offered? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share the reclamation of the sacreds with someone throughout the week.

Day 4:

Practice looking for expressions of grace in culture

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to engage with cultural expressions that are similar or different from your own.

This can be through books, films, theater, coffee shops, faith spaces, shopping centers, community hubs, etc.

What expressions of grace can you affirm in this culture? If you can't see any, where can more grace be offered? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

What expressions of grace can you affirm in other interconnected cultures? If you can't see any, where can more grace be offered? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

What expressions of grace can you affirm in cultures that may seem distant or different? If you can't see any, where can more grace be offered? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share grace with someone throughout the week. Even if that someone is yourself.

Day 5:

Practice looking for grace in nature

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to immerse yourself in nature. This can be through a walk around your neighborhood or local park, gardening, hiking, outdoor sports, sunbathing, swimming, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, etc.

What expressions of grace can you notice in nature? Say a prayer of gratitude for God's grace.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Give your body what it needs.

If you need touch, try soothing, massaging, or rubbing.

If you need movement, try stretching, twisting, dancing, exercising.

If you need sound, try humming, singing, or shouting.

Always remember to breathe.

Explore creative ways to share grace with someone throughout the week. Even if that someone is yourself.

Grace Like an Ocean

A Prayer for Grace

Grace is like an ocean
And The Spirit hovers over
the face of these waters
Yet we're not meant to play it
safe by the harbor
We are all drawn deeper and farther
Called into relationships
to travel seas uncharted.

Like raindrops
On our cheeks and our chests
Our tears and our sweat
Connecting our bodies, our blood
Streams of consciousness collected in
Pondering ponds, puddles,
swamps, and gutters
Wandering waters so often huddled
where we're taught they don't belong.

However far from the garden—
Life grows wherever the water flows
In the cracked concrete of a city
street or even in the desert heat we
can still find the budding of rose.

Only our imagination limits
where Holy Spirit moves
Like a flood
Breaking gates and walls
Baptizing beyond the lines of society
And our comfort zones
The raging waves make mountains,
and shape diamonds cut from stone,
gentle drops soak the soil where the
smallest seed becomes the tallest oak.

No place too high or too low,
too remote or too close
Grace explodes and unfolds
The tides are ever changing
and giving rise to new hope.

Remember these waters
where it all begins
Where we all belong
All gathered, all called, all sent
Grace is the water in which we all swim.

Week 5



By Joe Davis



Scan with your phone camera to watch the video for this week.

God delights in our goodness and judges sin

God announces the goodness of all of creation, from the smallest fish to the largest elephant, to you and me. God celebrates the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given each of us to serve our neighbor and the world in need.

Yet there is evil in the world, which God condemns and works against. Sometimes we are a part of that evil, caught in webs beyond individual choices of right and wrong. Sometimes we are recipients of that evil, through actions of others or networks in the world. God judges sin, but always in service of love for all of God's (good) creatures.

Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:2

Original poem for further reflection:

Good & Worthy of Love *A reminder of my body's goodness*

I often tried to run from my body
because it didn't feel like a safe
place to be,
yet no matter how I fight
or punish my body
it still chooses to stay with me.

As if it only ever wants
my highest good
and was purposefully made for me.
As if love itself was stitched
and knit together,
perfectly shaped for me.

I didn't organize my organs,
order my bones and hair to grow,
or explain to my valves, vessels,
and veins
where blood and air should flow.

Without forcing me to believe,
no need to perform or achieve,
my body was there to care for me,
and all I did was receive.

My body pledges allegiance
to the thesis of my being,
releasing what doesn't feed me
and keeping all I need.

If I hug myself,
my body hugs back even tighter.
Every time I take a breath
my chest opens even wider.

I will stop looking for excuses
not to be loved because
if this doesn't speak to
an infinitely loving intent
then I don't know what does.

I am grateful for this body
for it is divine, sacred, and Godly.

I will listen to its gentle whispers
so it needn't shout so loudly:

I am good and worthy of love
I am good and worthy of love
I am good and worthy of love
I am good, I am more than enough.

Your worth is never an effort
nor earned
but adorned
when you were born
it was inherent and apparent
from the womb when you were formed.

Perhaps this is something
you've never been told
or never felt,
but I am here to help
you tell yourself
until you feel it in every cell
of yourself.

And although this truth
is the most beautiful truth
I could ever give you,
it is true not because I wrote it,
but because it's written within you.

You are immeasurably loveable,
every single inch of you.
You have an intricate system
dedicated to defending you.

Every softened edge
and scar is hardwon.

You may not believe in miracles,
but I'm here to tell you: you are one.

Will you stop looking for excuses
not to be loved because
if this doesn't speak of
an infinitely loving intent
then I don't know what does.

There is beauty in your body,
it is divine, sacred, and Godly.

Will you listen to its gentle whispers
so it needn't shout so loudly:

You are good and worthy of love
You are good and worthy of love
You are good and worthy of love

You are good,
You are more than enough

The body is our best friend
no matter how many times
we neglect or disrespect it,
everything it ever did
was to keep us safe and protected,
without question.

So much time invested
trying to turn the body
into what it already is:
good and worthy of love.

Goodness moves with
a boundlessness.
So much goodness surrounds us
and abounds so much
it's bound to be found deep down in us.

More than empty rhetoric
or pretty aesthetic,
goodness is where we come from
and where we're always heading.

Goodness is our essence,
our natural state,
our default setting.

Our goodness will grow
and overflow
and spread
if we let it.

My body, your body, our bodies
are not meant to be discarded.

Our mother earth births bodies
to be fed,

bodies to be watered,
all that we are
is to be held in love and honored.

We can stop looking for excuses
not to be loved because
if this doesn't speak to
an infinitely loving intent
then I don't know what does.

We can celebrate this body
for it is divine, sacred, and Godly.

Will we listen to its gentle whispers
so it needn't shout so loudly:

We are good and worthy of love
We are good and worthy of love
We are good and worthy of love
We are good, I am more than enough.

God spoke life into existence like a poetic refrain sung over us and all of creation. Of course a loving Creator would want to protect that goodness from being corrupted by evil, so God judges sin. Because of sin, the sacred has become desecrated, yet we are called to join God in the good and holy work of reclaiming the sacred or what can be called the “re-sacretization of all creation.”

In Hebrew, the word for judge is שֹׁפֵט (shofet), and it is related to the root verb שָׁפַט (shafat), which means to judge, govern, or bring justice. This concept of judging encompasses much more than modern legalistic connotations; it includes leadership, guidance, protection, and ensuring righteousness and equity in society. Judges were seen as divinely appointed leaders who carried out God's justice (mishpat, מִשְׁפָּט), which is a related word often translated as justice or judgment.

Mishpat refers to the moral order and social equity that God desires in society, including care for the vulnerable (e.g., widows, orphans, and the oppressed). It's about restorative, not merely punitive, justice. Therefore, a shofet is not merely a legal arbiter but a person tasked with ensuring the flourishing of communal well-being according to God's law.

Greek Context in Christian Scriptures

In the New Testament, the Greek words κρίνω (krinō, to judge) and δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosynē, righteousness/justice) carry this dual sense of judgment and justice. The Greek concept of justice is strongly tied to relationships—right relationships with God, others, and society. Jesus exemplifies this in his teachings and actions, embodying both the judge and the bringer of justice, restoring people physically, socially, and spiritually.

Biblical judgement reflects God's character by ensuring that justice is not just a legal process but a holistic restoration of peace (*shalom*). God's

justice, as seen in the scriptures, seeks to heal relationships, defend the oppressed, and guide communities back to harmony and wholeness.

Day 1:

Practice listening for God in the scriptures

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. This goodness is living and breathing through Christ, through stories old and new, and even through you and me. Take some time to read your favorite scripture or a sacred text of your choice and write down all ways you see restoration or reclamation of the sacred.

How does this reclamation of the sacred shape you and your life? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

How does this reclamation of the sacred shape the lives of those close to you? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

How does this reclamation of the sacred shape the lives of those far from you? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share the reclamation of the sacreds with someone throughout the week.

Day 2:

Practice listening for the sacredness in your body

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to relax your body and listen to your breath as if it is the breath of God slowly and gently moving through you from head to toe. Write what feelings and sensations emerge. It may help to close your eyes and place your hands over your heart or your belly.

What sacredness can you affirm in your body? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

What sacredness can you affirm in the bodies of those around you? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

What sacredness can you affirm in the bodies of those far from you? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share the reclamation of the sacreds with someone throughout the week.

Day 3:

Practice listening for the sacred in the collective stories of people throughout your community

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to connect with the sacred stories of those you are in community with. This can be through an in-person conversation, text, phone call, Facetime or Zoom, etc.

What sacredness can you affirm in their body? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

What sacredness can you affirm in the bodies of those they are connected

with? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

What sacredness can you affirm in the bodies of those they may be distanced from? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share the reclamation of the sacreds with someone throughout the week.

Day 4:

Practice listening for the sacred in culture

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to engage with cultural expressions that are similar or different from your own. This can be through books, films, theater, coffee shops, faith spaces, shopping centers, community hubs, etc.

What sacredness can you affirm in this culture? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

What sacredness can you affirm in other interconnected cultures?

Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

What sacredness can you affirm in cultures that may seem distant or different? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Explore creative ways to share the reclamation of the sacreds with someone throughout the week.

Day 5:

Practice listening for the sacred in nature

Lent offers us space to lean in and listen with more intentionality and care. Find a place where you can sit comfortably with minimal clutter and distractions. Ask God to speak to you.

God is good and everything God created is good. Take some time to immerse yourself in nature. This can be through a walk around your neighborhood or local park, gardening, hiking, outdoor sports,

sunbathing, swimming, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, etc.

What sacredness can you notice in nature? Say a prayer of gratitude for healing and wholeness.

Reflect and journal about your responses.

Give your body what it needs.

If you need touch, try soothing, massaging, or rubbing.

If you need movement, try stretching, twisting, dancing, exercising.

If you need sound, try humming, singing, or shouting.

Always remember to breathe.

Explore creative ways to share the reclamation of the sacred with someone throughout the week.

Week 6 (Holy Week)



Scan with your phone camera to watch the video for this week.



By Ellie Roscher

God meets us in bread, wine, and water

God promises to meet us in, with, and under simple elements of daily life. At a table that Jesus sets, God forgives us and feeds us with love eternal. In water and promise, God brings us to new life and breathes in us gifts that help the world. Through these ordinary elements, God does some truly extraordinary things. We can delight in God's goodness and all across creation, seeing God in a beautiful sunset, the laugh of a small child, or the warmth of a fire, trusting we can always return to bread, wine, and water, where God will always be waiting for us.

God loves us eternally

Through the resurrection of Jesus, God shows us that death does not have the final word. God promises to be with us not only in this life but also in the life to come. God promises a new heaven and a new earth where there's no more crying, no more dying, only life, only love. God's promises to love us eternally are not just about the future but compel us to live as if love extends beyond the bounds of death.

Day One:

God promises to meet us in bread

My spouse started baking bread from scratch while we were dating. It has been such a gift to have warm, homemade bread over the years. He brings his bread to holiday meals and dinner parties, and I take delight in watching people admire it and enjoy it. I let it be his thing until about a year ago. While he was traveling for work, I tried making ciabatta from scratch. I loved the ritual of it, how it took little bouts of attention over two days to tend to. I loved how such simple, elemental ingredients combine to create such a nourishing, comforting loaf. I loved watching my children hum over a warm piece of bread out of the oven and ask for more. In *How to Eat, Thich Nhat Hanh* writes, "So in this slice of bread there is sunshine, there is cloud, there is the labor of the farmer, the joy of having flour, and the skill of the baker and then—miraculously!— there is the bread. The whole cosmos has come together so that this piece of bread can be in your hand."

God promises to meet us in, with, and under simple daily elements like bread. The table is already set. The bread is already made. We simply get to receive God's love and take it in like bread. We are forgiven and fed with eternal love. God's love is sustaining and nourishing. It is the lifeforce underneath us that buoys us.

Sometimes we eat without even realizing we are eating. Sometimes we chew on our worries instead of chewing on food. And then other times we remember the magic of mindful eating. Call to mind a holistically nourishing meal. What did you eat? What did you drink? Where were you? Who were you with? What conversation happened over the course of breaking bread together?

Today, contemplate what really nourishes you. Ask yourself what you are hungry for in food and in life. When you eat, can you take time to eat mindfully, seeing

your food, smelling it, feeling it in your mouth, tasting it, and noticing how it makes you feel? Taste the deliciousness of the moment.

Take a moment to thank God for nourishing food and for forgiveness and eternal love that truly sustains us.

Day Two:

God promises to meet us in water

My friend was teaching a unit on revolution in an elementary school in California and asked his young students to draw a picture of revolution. As he walked around, one student was drawing water.

"Tell me about your picture," he said to the student, curious.

"Revolution is like the ocean," the student said. "Water has the power to shape rocks one wave at a time."

Water is patient. It does not resist, it flows. It understands that what cannot be achieved by force can be achieved with gentleness. It goes where it wants to go, easily traveling around barriers. Nothing stands against it. From the watery depths comes life. Water can bring destruction and chaos. Water also soothes, satiates, cleanses, and renews. Just as a wilting plant stands up tall when watered, God's love is a balm to our withered and weary hearts. Our bodies are mostly

water, God's love flowing through us, hydrating our cells. God promises a day when there is only love, only life.

God promises to meet us in the ordinary element of water. Just as water has touched every day of our lives, sustaining us, so too has God's love. God renews us in the water and promises of baptism and then again day in and day out. God meets us in the vast ocean, small puddles, smooth lakes, and flowing rivers. God meets us in our tears and in the rain.

Today, reflect on what you are thirsty for and what relieves your thirst. Notice the water in your life. Close your eyes and enjoy the sensation of water while you bathe. Mindfully sip your water and feel it nourish you. Fill a bowl with water and place your hand in it, feeling it caress you. Take a moment and thank God for the gift of life and the gift of water. Look for signs of life and love in your day, flowing with the soft power of God's love.

Day Three:

God promises to meet us in the goodness of creation

God is always already in creation waiting to meet us. All that is good and full of life is full of God. God created something out of nothing, and that creation continues. Beauty, life, and love is all around us, but sometimes we forget to see it. I miss a sunset because I am sneaking one more thing into my workday at my computer. I miss the luminous smile on the face of my child because I am checking notifications on my phone. I forget the magic of wind blowing through the leaves on the trees because I am choosing instead to gaze at the sidewalk. We can forget the glory of creation because it is all around us. Sometimes faith is dusting off our eyes, hearts, and souls and looking again so we can see that, in fact, our daily lives are shimmering with holiness. God's love is made tangible and visible through common yet extraordinary elements of creation.

When we take the time to go outside and listen to the birds, notice the tall tree branches and the sky behind them, and feel the smooth petal of a flower, we can remember that we too are creatures and that we are all deeply connected to God's web of life. Nature can calm our nervous system, reset our gaze, and help us feel rightly small in God's vast universe. Nature has a healing power, offering beauty and a sense of grounding. God is inviting us to delight in creation and find a sense of spaciousness and aliveness there. God is whispering through creation, "Only life, only love."

Today, step outside. Use your senses and delight in the goodness of God's creation. Notice. Admire. Thank the God of creation who makes all things new. Know that you are a part of that creation. You are good and beautiful, too, and look for signs of life and love, signs of resurrection all around.

Day Four:

God promises to be with us in this life

God promises to be with us in this life as well as in the life to come. We do not need to wait for death to fully receive the everlasting love of God. God is

inviting us to live in a way that trusts and knows that love reaches beyond the bounds of death. If we believe God's promise for a new heaven and a

new earth, we can see glimpses of that here and now. We can see life and love seeping through to overcome death.

When I teach and practice yoga, we end our asana practice in corpse pose, which is lying on our backs with our heels wide, our palms flipped up toward the ceiling. In this final pose, we practice surrender, calm, and letting go. We soften our bodies and feel the earth holding us up. We let go of attachment to our practice and any particular outcome and, in the pose called corpse, we remember that our bodies die in a way that invites us to really live. After several minutes letting the practice integrate in our bodies and receiving the gift of conscious rest, we awaken our bodies, roll onto our sides, creating the fetal position, and then press up to a seat. This motion symbolizes rebirth. We die to one practice and rise anew, refreshed, with a fresh start, to move onto the next

part of our day. We begin again. It is like a little death and a little resurrection each time.

Every sleep is death, and every morning is new life. Every exhale is a release, and every inhale is an opportunity for new breath, new life. Parenting can feel like a series of small deaths, an endless practice in letting go. Healing and growing asks for little deaths of the ego. Plants resurrect. So do relationships. Amid it all, God's love sustains us. We do not have to wait for death to know the love of God that overcomes death.

Today, can you notice the small moments of death and rebirth in your day, even if it is being conscious of a few rounds of inhales and exhales? How do you sense God's everlasting love undergirding it all and companioning you? Can you feel God's love ushering in more life?

Day Five:

God promises to be with us in the life to come

Unlike our ancestors, today, we can pick up our phones and instantly have access to information about war, disaster, violence, famine, death, pain and heartache all over the world. Our bodies and minds are not structured to manage that much

information that fast. Some days we focus on the death, we let fear loom and grow, and we lose hope. Other days we escape or numb out to get through the day. Neither feel dignifying or sustainable.

During Holy Week, God invites us to move through our ancient story of fear and hope, death and life, hatred and love in community. God reminds our community that hope, life, and love have the last word. Our faith asks us to trust in God's promise.

Jesus' friends fell asleep on him when he most needed companionship. Peter denied knowing him when he most needed to be known. On the cross, Jesus took on the shape of a slave and was emptied of his worldly power. His last words before he died expressed feeling abandoned even by God. Then he was dead for three days. During Holy Week, we don't rush through the pain and heartache. We don't gloss over the death. We don't jump to the good news. And if we really dwell in the

fact that Jesus suffered and died and stayed dead, and let that take our own breath away, then God's promises land differently. God, who knows abandonment, promises to be with us. God, who knows betrayal, promises no more tears. God, who knows hatred, promises only love. God, who knows death, promises only life. Forever. It is all too much for our human brains and hearts to fully comprehend. It is just ours to trust that God's love is bigger, wider, deeper, and remains longer than our comprehension.

Today, despite all the evidence to the contrary, can you believe that hope, life, and love will have the final word? Even if it feels wildly irrational and beyond your mind's reason, can you dwell in God's promise? Beyond the grip of death, God's love is wrapping itself around you.



St. James Lutheran Church

Join us for this Lenten and Easter Season. All are welcome!

1380 N. Waukegan Rd
Lake Forest, IL 60045
847.234.4850

stjameslutheran.org

Ash Wednesday Wednesday, March 5th @ 7:30 PM

Embark on your Lenten journey with your community. In this moving worship service, we are invited to feel our mortality as it is traced in the sign of a cross on our foreheads—the same sign that is traced in oil at our baptism.

Sunday Services March 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6 @ 10:00 AM

Staffed nursery at 9:30 AM

Worship with us and commune at the Lord's table. Experience a variety of music styles and teachings that are relevant to your life.

Holy Week

Palm Sunday
April 13th
10:00 AM

Maundy Thursday
April 17th
7:30 PM

Good Friday
April 17th
7:30 PM

Easter Sunday
April 20th
10:00 AM

Lenten Community Nights

**Wednesdays: March 12,
19, 26, April 2, 9**

**Dinner & Discussion
@ 6:00 PM**

Enjoy fellowship, a meal and be nourished through spiritual discussion centered around the basics of our faith.

**Lenten Vespers Service
@ 7:30 PM**

Let go of what burdens you by drawing closer to God through a contemplative, relaxing Vespers worship service.