



# BETTER

2019 SAINT STEPHEN AMEC LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

Greetings St. Stephen Family.

We're entering into the Lenten Season, a moment set aside on the Christian calendar where we commemorate Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the wilderness.

During this time as Christians, we believe as we practice the discipline of sacrifice, God centers our spirits and strengthens our hearts to face the challenges that come our way.

So let us ready ourselves to sow in sacrifice, in order that God may allow us to reap in power.

Blessings on you,

Pastor Bailey

# What is the Daniel Fast?

The **Daniel Fast** is based upon the prophet Daniel's fasting experiences as recorded in the Bible. Scripture gives us some insight (such as in Dan. 10:3) into what he ate and didn't eat; however, we don't know his complete menu. What we do know is this: In Daniel 1, Daniel chose not to eat the royal food that he was being served and ate only vegetables and drank water. Another time (in Daniel 10:2-3) he deprived himself of choice food, meat, and wine as he sought the Lord in prayer. Most commentaries believe "choice food" would have been bread and sweets.

The intention of today's Daniel Fast is not to duplicate exactly what Daniel did but the spirit in which he did it. Daniel's passion for the Lord caused him to hunger and thirst more for spiritual food than for physical food, which should be the desire of anyone choosing to participate in this type of fast.

# The Daniel Fast Food List

- **All fruit:** fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned.
- **All vegetables:** fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned.
- **All whole grains:** amaranth, barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa, millet, and whole wheat.
- **All nuts & seeds:** almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, and sunflower seeds; unsweetened almond milk. Nut butters are also included.
- **All legumes:** canned or dried; black beans, black eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, and split peas.
- **All quality oils:** avocado, coconut, grapeseed, olive, peanut, sesame, and walnut.
- **Beverages:** distilled water, filtered water, and spring water.
- **Other:** unsweetened almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, or soy milk; herbs, spices, salt, pepper, unsweetened coconut flakes, seasonings, Bragg's Liquid Aminos, soy products, and tofu.

## Foods to Avoid on the Daniel Fast

- **All meat & animal products:** bacon, beef, buffalo, eggs, fish, lamb, poultry, and pork.
- **All dairy products:** butter, cheese, cream, milk, and yogurt.
- **All sweeteners:** agave nectar, artificial sweeteners, brown rice syrup, cane juice, honey, molasses, raw sugar, syrups, and sugar.
- **All leavened bread & yeast:** baked goods and Ezekiel bread (if it contains yeast and honey).
- **All refined & processed food products:** artificial flavorings, chemicals, food additives, preservatives, white flour, and white rice.
- **All deep-fried foods:** corn chips, French fries, and potato chips.
- **All solid fats:** lard, margarine, and shortening.
- **Beverages:** alcohol, carbonated drinks, coffee, energy drinks, herbal tea, and tea.

# Daily Guide

## [How to Use this Devotional]

Start Here:

Use the questions below to begin the process of preparing your mind, body, and spirit for this 40-Day Spiritual Sacrifice mentally and spiritually. Fill in the blanks

### **10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:**

1. When I wake up on Resurrection Sunday morning, how will I be different?

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2. Is there a habit or sin in my life that repeatedly gets in the way of loving God with my whole heart or loving my neighbor as myself? How do I address that habit over the next 40 days?

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3. Is there anyone in my life from whom I need to ask forgiveness or pursue reconciliation?

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4. What practical steps can I take to carve out time for daily contemplation?

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5. What spiritual discipline do I need to improve upon or want to try?

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6. What are some things in my life that I tell myself I need but I don't?

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7. Why am I giving this particular thing up? How does giving it up draw me closer to God and prepare me for Easter?

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8. What am I going to tell myself when self-denial gets hard?

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9. Is it necessary/helpful for me to share the nature my fast with others or should I keep it private?

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10. What do the ashes mean to me this year?

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# Week 1:

March 5-10, 2019

## **MORNING GLORY**

Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster." [JOEL 2:1-2, 12-13]

## **GOSPEL READING**

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. [MARK 8:27-30]

## **PRAYER**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Amen. [PSALM 51:1-2,6,10-12]

## **REFLECTION**

What hesitations or hindrances do you have in beginning this journey of Lent?

What habits/tendencies of self-absorption do you need to tear yourself from?

In what ways do you sense a need for the Spirit of God to make Jesus real to you?

## **CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK**

Make a special prayer notebook and list all the people in your life who need prayers; pray for them each day during this Lenten season. Add someone new every day.

## WORSHIP

**Successes:** What successes from the fast have you experienced this week that you would like to celebrate?

**Challenges:** What difficulties have you encountered over the past week that you would like to acknowledge?

**Action Steps:** Identify at least one spiritual goal that you would like to work on as you begin Week 2

**Sermon Title:**

**Text:**

**Main Points:**

**The Main Idea:**

**How can I apply this message to my life?**

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## **ACTIVITY:**

Our aim during Lent is something like a wilderness experience. We want to shake up our lives significantly enough that when we reach for our usual comforts and grasp a fistful of air, we are forced to cling to Christ – his body, his blood. We want to see just how upside down our world really is as our “important things” prove to be perishable goods, as the light shines on our “righteousness” and exposes the layers of “self” beneath the surface, and as our “busy” lives are shown to simply lack wisdom.

The desire is a new lease on life, a view into the vast world of God, a deep breath and long look above the tree line of self-absorption. So in Lent we focus on getting away from the life of flesh and into the life of the Spirit, denying our ways and embracing God's.

The point of giving things up is not to be reminded of how much we miss them, but rather to be awakened to how much we miss God and long for his life-giving Spirit. This means, of course, that Lent is not only about giving up things. It is also about adding things, God-things.

- Having given up junk food for a healthy diet, what will you do with the energy you gain?
- Having given up social media, to whom will you devote meaningful conversation?
- Having given up TV as a default activity, how will you use that time to cultivate quality family time?
- Having sacrificed whatever form of selfishness you indulge, how will you meet the needs of others?

## Week 2:

March 11-17, 2019

Repentance

### **MORNING GLORY**

Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness. [PSALM 96:1-5, 11-13]

## **SCRIPTURE**

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." [MARK 9:30-37]

## **PRAYER**

I Love you Father, I love you so much and I come before you just pouring out my heart. God you are so worthy to be praised, I so want to be with you Jesus, walk with me and guide me. Father forgive me. Forgive me for all my sins, by thought, word and deed. God create in me a new heart; transform me so I will be who you will have me to be. Teach me how to walk and how to talk, teach me how to sit still and how to worship in your majesty, Father. God this Lenten Season I turn myself over to you completely. I understand it won't be easy in the flesh for I have given myself over to my desires for too long but right now Father I declare – I am yours. Fix me God. Use me Father. And I will forever sing your praises because you are the one I want, for I love you Jesus, always. Amen -Rev. Darrell Johnson (2016)

## **REFLECTION**

In what areas are you feeling shame, guilt, a need for a do-over, or drive to “do better”?

Take a few moments and confess these areas to God. Thank him for his grace and mercy in the gospel that frees us from being slaves to these things.

What areas of your life seem apart from God's control? Where is it difficult to feel God's presence in your circumstances?

Is there any area of your life in which you are resistant to God's control? Confess this in prayer to God.

What is your practice of confession and repentance like? Where do you need to grow?

In what areas of your life are you guilty of walking in isolation? What areas of your life does no one know about? What areas of struggle do you need to invite your community into?

## **CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK**

Perform a random Act of Kindness this week (i.e., volunteer at Soup Kitchen, help a neighbor, visit a friend, bring lunch to a coworker, send a note of encouragement to someone)

## **WORSHIP**

**Successes:** What successes from the fast have you experienced this week that you would like to celebrate?

**Challenges:** What difficulties have you encountered over the past week that you would like to acknowledge?

**Action Steps:** Identify at least one spiritual goal that you would like to work on as you begin Week 3

**Sermon Title:**

**Text:**

**Main Points:**

**The Main Idea:**

**How can I apply this message to my life?**

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Repentance is a response to God's grace. It leads to joy and restoration. Not frustration from trying harder, and not despair from beating yourself up. Those are forms of penance. Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, not tries harder or feels worse (Romans 10:4). He condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1-4). Therefore, repentance is motivated by love for God and a desire for fellowship with him.

Repentance is addressed to God. King David's famous confession is a great example of addressing God: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:1-3). His transgressions were adultery and murder, two sins clearly against other people. Yet, he says to God: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (51:4). This does not abrogate his responsibility to others, but simply underscores the primacy of God in all things.

Repentance is walking in the light. There was a time when David walked in darkness, unwilling to see things for what they were. In Psalm 32, he writes: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer." (32:3-4). Only when he came clean with God did he experience the grace of God: "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not

cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." (32:5).

Repentance is taking responsibility for our sin. In Psalm 51, David locates the problem:

"I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (51:4). He does not blame or justify or look for a way out. He goes on: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (51:5). The problem is not just that he sinned, but that he is sinful. It would not be enough to clean the outside of the cup, which is why he seeks a deeper cleansing: "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being ... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow ... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (51:6-7, 10).

Repentance is turning to God in faith. In everyday language, repentance means to "change your mind," to reconsider how we are living our lives in light of our new identity and purpose in Christ. We are prone to wander, to pursue life on our terms, to locate our sense of worth and joy and peace outside of God. So the call to repentance is a standing invitation to give up our idolatrous pursuits, and turn to the one true God who restores us to the life for which we were made. We cannot save ourselves.

Repentance is initial and ongoing. You may get in the light, and feel very liberated.

But then it won't be long until you are unmotivated, feeling the disappointment of another rut. This does not underscore the failure of repentance, but merely teaches us that repentance is both initial and ongoing. Real change always requires a clean break, reaffirmed through subsequent decisions. If you are in a mess, and it has happened over

Week 2: March 11-17, 2019 **REPENTANCE**

weeks or months or years, it is not going to get cleaned up right away. It's a lifestyle.

"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit" (Psalm 51:12)

# Week 3:

March 18-24, 2019

## Humility

### **MORNING GLORY**

Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, and casts it to the dust. The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy."

The path of the righteous is level; you make level the way of the righteous. In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul. My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works. [ISAIAH 26:4-9, 12]

### **GOSPEL READING**

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise." [MARK 10:32-34]

## **REFLECTION**

Have you given thanks for the humility of Jesus?

What are you holding on to that you need to let go of for the good of others?

Do you sense a need to submit to God in some area of your life?

From whom do you want approval or attention? What are you pursuing or doing in order to lift yourself up?

Are you willing for every stone to be turned over in your soul?

How does your community help you know who and whose you are?

## **CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK**

### **Financial Freedom**

Restrict yourself from using your debit card for the week. Other than necessary expenses (utilities, mortgage, bills), use cash for any spending for the week. Use the “envelope system” as a cash management process to help you monitor spending for the week. Pay close attention to how easily you tend to swipe your card and meditate on ways to act with wiser stewardship.

## WORSHIP

**Successes:** What successes from the fast have you experienced this week that you would like to celebrate?

**Challenges:** What difficulties have you encountered over the past week that you would like to acknowledge?

**Action Steps:** Identify at least one spiritual goal that you would like to work on as you begin Week 4

**Sermon Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Text:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Main Points:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**The Main Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**How can I apply this message to my life?**

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# Week 4:

March 25-31, 2019

Suffering

## **MORNING GLORY**

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

[SELECTED VERSES FROM PSALM 118]

## **SCRIPTURE**

Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness; approvedness; and approvedness, hope: and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us. [Romans 5:1-5]

## **PRAYER**

Almighty and Most Merciful God, we ask forgiveness for our sins committed by thought, word or deed. In the name of Jesus, cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Give us a clean heart and renew the right Spirit within us. Thank you, Lord, for answering prayer. Amen.

-Deaconess Douglas (2016)

## **REFLECTION**

1. How does the reality of suffering challenge your faith?
2. Have you tried to explain suffering in ways that might be unbiblical?
3. How does Jesus' death and resurrection give you strength and hope?
4. How does your inclination to avoid hardship hinder your ability to follow Jesus?
5. How does the Spirit's presence in your suffering comfort and strengthen you?
6. Is the Spirit currently leading you somewhere you don't want to go?

## **CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK**

### **Media Fast**

This week, choose to Unplug—TV, Facebook, Twitter, Netflix, etc. This is perhaps the single best way to carve out some extra time in your day for prayer and meditation.

**WORSHIP**

**Successes:** What successes from the fast have you experienced this week that you would like to celebrate?

**Challenges:** What difficulties have you encountered over the past week that you would like to acknowledge?

**Action Steps:** Identify at least one spiritual goal that you would like to work on as you begin Week 4

**Sermon Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Text:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Main Points:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**The Main Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How can I apply this message to my life?**

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## Be Imitators of God

Written by Deaconess Monica Douglas (2011)

Since you are God's dear children, you must try to be like Him. Your life must be controlled by love, just as Christ loved us and gave His life for us as a sweet smelling offering and sacrifice that pleased the Father.

Say "No" to selfish desires and wants, and say "Yes" to God, Who has given us His Word to teach us how to live our lives on earth. Jesus told His followers (disciples) to take up their cross daily, deny themselves and follow Him. These crosses are sometimes very difficult, painful, cause misery and suffering. To carry the cross involves self-denial and self-restraint. There will be unforeseen circumstances that will be unbearable. Trust and obey God anyhow—with Him at our side we can endure. Speak to Him daily. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. He will strengthen you to bear the tests. There is a constant message of hope for the kingdom to come, but there is also help for the kingdom at hand. As Christians we look forward to the joys of heaven and at the same time we embrace the joys of life.

If you forget anything, don't forget Jesus. When times get hard, remember Jesus. When tears come, remember Jesus. When there seems to be no way, remember Jesus. Let Him be your all in all.

# Week 5:

April 1-7, 2019

Lament

## **MORNING GLORY**

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. [LAMENTATIONS 3:21-26]

## **SCRIPTURE**

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. [MARK 13:24-31]

## A PRAYER OF COMMUNAL LAMENT

[also see Psalm 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 85, 90]

God of Mercy, Love and Peace! We cry out for the ways in which suffering and brokenness has overpowered the world. We mourn for all of humanity and the places where evil prevails. There is so much pain within the world due to ongoing turmoil that occurs as a result of power and privilege. Our hearts break for your children who are without a home. The sick suffer without an answer for healing. Communities are destroyed because of the increase of poverty. The marginalized suffer because of those who refuse to honor their humanity. Dangerous leaders choose to fight for the status quo instead of changing the systems to create equity. We call out the evils of racism, classism, sexism, violence, hatred, intolerance and all of despair. Lord, look down upon us and hear our distress. Deliver us from the hand of the evil one and shower down a miracle. Give us the courage to stay fervent in our faith. Remind us of the redemption, power and glory that are made possible through a relationship with you. For in these times of trouble, we need you. We praise you for you never give up on us. We celebrate that in the midst of trials, we are not alone. Thank you for your presence that gives us new mercies from day to day. Guide us by the power of your Spirit as we wait for an answer from you. Let it be so. Amen -Rev. Samuel Green, Jr. (2016)

## REFLECTION

Lament is not about getting things off your chest. It's about casting your anxieties upon God, and trusting him with them. Mere complaining indicates a lack of intimacy with God. Because lament is a form of prayer, lament transforms our cries and complaints into worship. Walter Brueggemann says that undergirding biblical lament is "a relationship between the lamenter and his God that is close and deep enough for the protester to speak in imperatives, addressing God as 'you' and reminding him of his covenantal promises." Anyone can complain, and practically everyone does. Christians can lament.

They can talk to God about their condition and ask him to change things because they have a relationship with him. To lament is to be utterly honest before a God whom our faith tells us we can trust.

Biblical lament affirms that suffering is real and spiritually significant, but not hopeless. In his mercy, our God has given us a form of language that bends his ear and pulls his heart.

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- What breaks your heart? What about your own brokenness frustrates or grieves you?
- How do you normally deal with these emotions? Can you say these things to God?
- What are your “how long?” questions?
- How have you experienced God's love in the past?
- How do you need to grow in your understanding of God's love in order to trust him now?
- What do you want the Lord to see in your life, in your church, in your community, and in our world?

## CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK

Purge of all your excess stuff and donate the best of it to Goodwill or a local thrift store that benefits your neighbors.

## WORSHIP

**Successes:** What successes from the fast have you experienced this week that you would like to celebrate?

**Challenges:** What difficulties have you encountered over the past week that you would like to acknowledge?

**Action Steps:** Identify at least one spiritual goal that you would like to work on as you begin Week 6.

**Sermon Title:**

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**Text:**

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**Main Points:**

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**The Main Idea:**

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**How can I apply this message to my life?**

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# Week 6:

April 8-14, 2019

“Sacrifice”

## SCRIPTURE

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to them indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that?

For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do well for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” [MARK 14:1-9]

## PRAYER

Send your Spirit among us, O God, as we meditate on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Prepare our minds to hear your Word. Move our hearts to accept what we hear. Purify our will to obey in joy and faith. This we pray through Christ, our Savior. Amen.

## REFLECTION

Philippians 2 says this of Jesus Christ: "He made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (2:7-8) Not only was it a sacrifice for God the Son to take on human flesh, you might say that Jesus' entire life was marked by sacrifice—giving up his rights and spending himself for the sake of others. From the beginning of his life, his feet were always walking toward the ultimate sacrifice of death on a brutal Roman cross. This brings a question to mind: Why is sacrifice so central to God's plan of redemption and reconciliation? Why couldn't God just forgive people of their sins without sacrifice?

Redemption is a term of value, so there must be a cost involved. To redeem means to buy back, to regain possession of something in exchange for payment. Because we are created in the image of God and he loves us, he considered us worth the cost of redemption.

Our salvation from sin and death was paid for through the sacrifice of Jesus by death on the cross. God thought we were worth saving. The questions we should continue to ask ourselves in this season are:

1. What forms of evil have we been saved from?
2. What does Christ's sacrifice save us for?
3. What promises of God (which you have in Christ) are you struggling to believe?
4. How can the blood of Christ give you assurance that God keeps his promises to his children?

Spend a few moments praising God that he is a covenant-keeper and that he has fulfilled all the provisions of the covenant that binds you in everlasting relationship with him.

## **WORSHIP**

**Successes:** What successes from the fast have you experienced this week that you would like to celebrate?

**Challenges:** What difficulties have you encountered over the past week that you would like to acknowledge?

**Action Steps:** Identify at least one spiritual goal that you would like to work on as you begin Holy Week.

Palm Sunday

**Sermon Title:**

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**Text:**

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**Main Points:**

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**The Main Idea:**

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**How can I apply this message to my life?**

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# Holy Week:

April 15-21, 2019

“Death”

## **SCRIPTURE**

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same. [MARK 14:22-31]

Worship

**Successes:** What successes from the fast have you experienced this week that you would like to celebrate?

**Challenges:** What difficulties have you encountered over the past week that you would like to acknowledge?

**Moving Forward:** What have you learned about yourself during this Lenten season? How will you use what you have learned to deepen your spiritual walk with God?



