



# Awakening to God's Beauty

A Lenten invitation to pray with art

# Awakening to God's

## **ABOUT THIS DEVOTIONAL**

To see Jesus with the heart is know that in the long run his kind of life is the only life worth living. To see Jesus with the heart is not only to believe in him but little by little become bearers of each other of his healing life until we become finally healed and whole and alive within ourselves.

— *Frederick Buechner*





# Beauty

Frederick Buechner, a Presbyterian author and pastor, once wrote about the need to see with “the eyes of the heart” — that is, to see the beauty and promises of God that lie beyond hopelessness, despair and decay.

This Lenten devotional is an opportunity to do just that. Each Sunday you will be invited to practice the spiritual discipline of *visio*

*divina*, which means “divine seeing.” Similar to that of the Benedictine practice *lectio divina* — “divine reading” — where a word or phrase of Scripture is pondered, *visio divina* uses an image instead as the focus for meditation. Accompanying each Sunday’s art is a guided meditation to help you slow down and see with your heart. During the week, the journey to Easter continues with reflections on

God’s handiwork and beauty as told in the Psalms. Many thanks to Krin Van Tatenhove, who not only wrote this devotional, but who also provided the photography featured inside. It is our hope that during this Lent you will awaken to a new awareness of God’s beauty and presence.

*Donna Frischknecht Jackson*  
Presbyterians Today editor





RANEY

JOHN RECTOR  
JAN. 21, 1860  
DEC. 14, 1911



MARY THRASHER  
DEC. 29, 1858  
APR. 25, 1920







ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

## Majesty everywhere

*O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! — Psalm 8:1a*

Many of us today will receive the ashen mark of a cross on our foreheads. We will hear the familiar phrase, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Like a medieval *memento mori* — an object serving as a reminder of death — these words bear a truth too often lost in the shuffling madness of our lives. Hurried schedules, worries and resentments, preoccupations with events that will certainly pass away — all conspire to rob our joy of living.

Meanwhile, Psalm 8, attributed to David, reminds us that our gracious and loving God is sovereign, and that our Creator’s majesty is evident all around us. These two themes — the brevity of life and our chance to experience majesty more fully — are perfect lodestars as we begin our journey.

*God, begin to cleanse our vision so that we may see your majesty reflected everywhere. Amen.*

## VISIO DIVINA

### GUIDED MEDITATION

*Breathe deeply and enter the cemetery.*

*What do you notice first?*

*Focus on the one part that has captured your attention.*

*What do you see with your heart?*

*What is beautiful?*

*What is hopeful?*

*After a few minutes, gaze at the entire picture.*

*What new things do you see?*

*What words of thanks do you want to share with God?*



THURSDAY, MARCH 7

## Beyond the heavens

*You have set your glory above the heavens. — Psalm 8:1b*

Find a place away from the pollution of city lights. Spread a blanket on the ground, lie on your back and gaze deeply into the night sky. Let the sheer brilliance of the heavens stir your spirit.

Then, consider these mind-blowing facts. The nearest star to us in the Milky Way is Proxima Centauri — 4.2 light-years away, traveling at 186,000 miles per second. Other points of light above us are not stars, but entire galaxies. And, as Edwin Hubble first proposed in the early 1900s, our universe seems to continue its expansion.

Long before astronomy or physics, a shepherd boy named David pondered the same skies, realizing a profound spiritual truth. As vast as the heavens appear, God's glory exists even beyond them.

As you fold up your blanket — literally or figuratively — take this glorious reminder into your daily life. Let it fill you with that sense of vastness that puts our individual lives into eternal perspective. Let it help you seize this vital day and make the most of it.

*God, whose glory exceeds the reaches of the universe, fill our hearts and minds with your presence today. Amen.*

FRIDAY, MARCH 8

## Who are we?

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? — Psalm 8:3–4*

My friend tells a childhood story. On a summer night in rural Wisconsin, he went outside his family's farmhouse and lay down on the grass. At first, as he gazed through the cold depths of infinite space, it caused him to shiver despite the warmth. He was filled with a dizzying sense of insignificance, like teetering on the edge of an abyss.

But then, something wonderful happened. A warmth arose inside him and spread throughout his body. "It's hard to find the right words," he said. "It was a knowledge beyond rational thought, an inner certainty that the architect who created the universe with such love feels the same way about my small life. I am a glorious part of creation!"

What a perfect illustration of David's question, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them?" The answer comes in verse five of Psalm 8: "You have made them little lower than angels, and crowned them with glory and honor."

*Mighty God, thank you for your love that treasures both the galaxies and our individual lives. Amen.*







SATURDAY, MARCH 9

### Right-minded dominion

*You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet . . .*

— Psalm 8:6

“Dominion” is a word we rarely use. From the Latin root *dominus* — “lord” — it means to exercise sovereignty and control.

God has given human beings dominion over this planet, but sadly, we exercise it in opposition to Jesus’ model of servant leadership. Our Western disconnection from the earth, our failure to realize how inextricably our lives are bound in every element of the biosphere, has led to catastrophic consequences. Melting ice caps, vanishing species and polluted skies are constant reminders.

Yet there are those among us who lift up an alternate way of living. Like Alex, a man I met who is dedicated to saving the salmon in Oregon. He and his team plant willow shoots in tributaries of the Columbia River, sprigs that grow into shade trees and cool the water to a temperature suitable for breeding. His passion for preserving the natural world is contagious.

I salute Alex and every other human being intent on exercising dominion with loving care and compassion.

*God, kindle in us a deep desire to protect this planet you have entrusted to our care. Amen.*



# First week in Lent

SUNDAY, MARCH 10

**This week's theme: Glory be!**

*Psalm 19*

The word “glory” means “magnificence” or “splendor.” Though the Psalms speak of God’s glory in manifold ways, the Israelites believed that the radiant presence of Yahweh — described later by rabbis as *shekinah* — resided most powerfully in the holy of holies, that inner sanctum where the ark resided. Only the high priest could enter this private place. When Jesus died on the cross, we hear that the curtain that separated the inner sanctum from mere mortals was torn in two, giving us all access to God. This is a powerful way to describe our Lenten journey. Glory is not just for those with spiritual gifts. It is here for all if we open our senses more fully.







## **VISIO DIVINA**

### **GUIDED MEDITATION**

*God's glory is everywhere, even on rugged mountains covered with low-hanging clouds.*

*Quiet your mind, close your eyes and say, "God's glory is here."*

*Now open your eyes and note what in this picture your eyes are drawn to.*

*Spend a few minutes pondering that part of the picture.*

*After a few minutes, gaze at the entire picture.*

*What new things do you see?*

*What emotions does this picture evoke?*

*Now say a prayer of thanks to God.*



MONDAY, MARCH 11

## Handiwork

*The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. — Psalm 19:1*

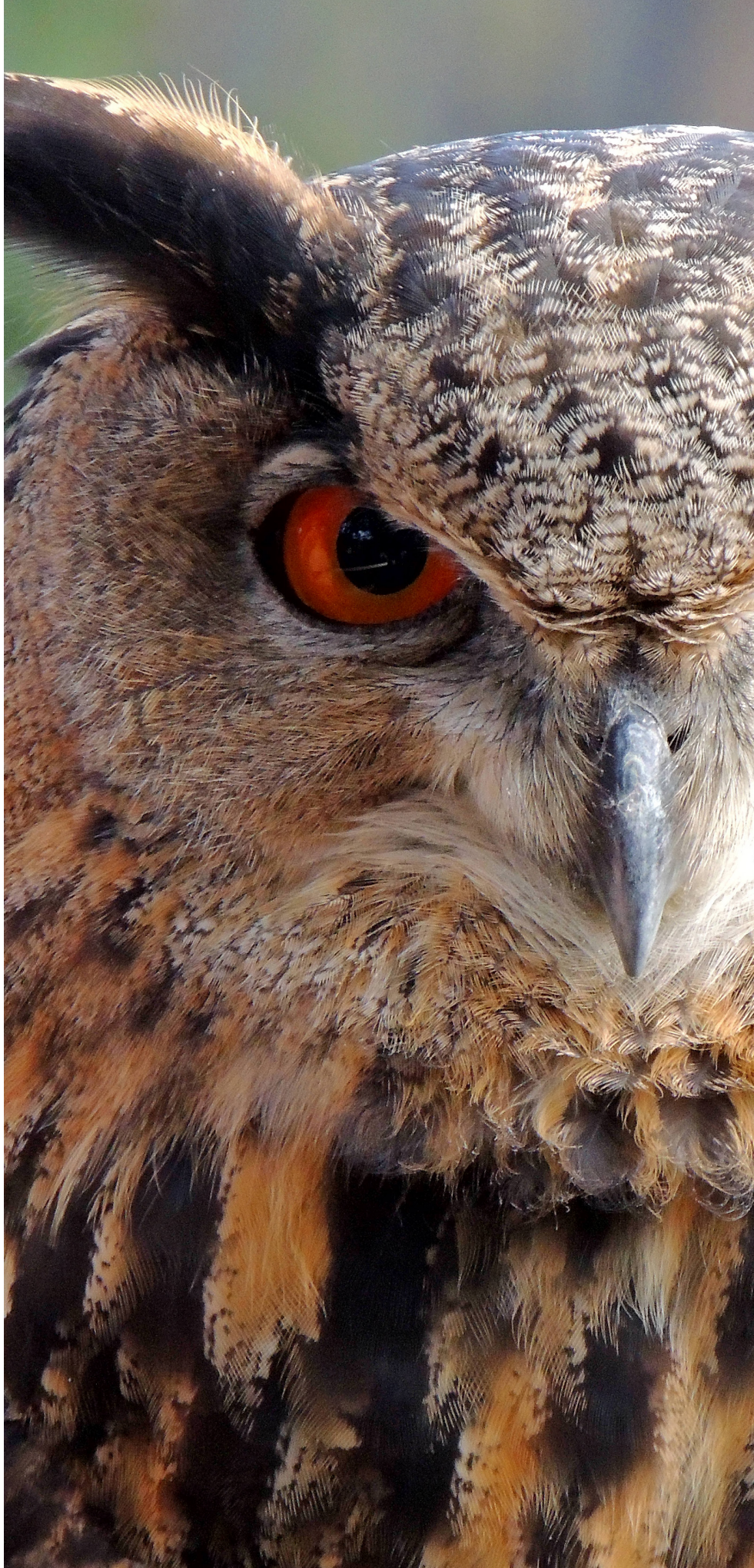
We all know people gifted at handiwork. It may be quilting, woodcrafting, mosaics or stained glass. Their ability to create beautiful forms from small, intricate pieces amazes us.

Psalm 19 speaks of God's handiwork in the heavens, but we can train our eyes to notice our Creator's design everywhere. We can see iridescent rainbows in a dragonfly's wings, the bright colors of lichen on an alpine boulder, the deep pools of light in the eyes of our cats, or the wrinkles of wisdom on the foreheads of our elders. We begin to notice repeated fingerprints, like spirals displayed from galaxies to nautilus shells, the rings of trees to our very fingerprints.

The English poet William Blake wrote: *To see a World in a Grain of Sand/And a Heaven in a Wild Flower/Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand/And Eternity in an hour.*

God is the designer of both the macrocosm and microcosm, and training ourselves to see this glory everywhere is a journey filled with beauty.

*Glorious Creator, focus our eyes to see your handiwork as we walk through our allotted days. Amen.*







**TUESDAY, MARCH 12**

### **Hearing the hidden language**

*Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. — Psalm 19:2–4a*

These are mysterious words that draw us deeper into the present. There is a silent language in Creation that pours forth, day and night, for those attuned to its discourse. The '60s rock band the Moody Blues said it this way in their iconic song "Tuesday Afternoon": "Something calls to me. The trees are drawing me near; I've got to find out why. Those gentle voices I hear explain it all with a sigh."

To hear the hidden language in the silence around us is at the heart of mindfulness. Again, we don't need to be mystics. There are many ways to access this inner knowledge: meditation, journaling or silent walks in the countryside. We can find it in corporate worship with others, especially during times of quietude. It is not so much the chosen discipline, but the intention, that will help us fine-tune our spiritual antennae.

*Loving God, give us ears to hear the language in your stillness. Amen.*

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13**

### **The course of joy**

*In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. — Psalm 19:4b–5*

The ancient Greeks described the course of the sun as Apollo driving his brilliant chariot across the sky from east to west. Long before that myth, David used a different poetic image. The sun, he says, is like an eager bridegroom that emerges from his canopy, filled with the joy of his impending marriage, ready to run his life's course.

What a wonderful way to think of the sun's rising and setting. Not as a repetition we take for granted, but as a daily celebration of God's bounty for our planet. With new awareness, we celebrate the joyous course of the sun as it dances on the surface of water, filters through trees, or paints its golden colors on the clouds of a sunset horizon.

Jesus once said, "The eye is the lamp of the body." Mindful people train their lamps to see the sun's radiance in all its forms, one day at a time.

*Gracious God, thank you for the daily display of your goodness in the course of the sun. Amen.*



THURSDAY, MARCH 14

## The warmth of God

*... and nothing is hid from its heat.*  
— Psalm 19:6b

I love to travel, and here in my home state of Texas I have visited some remarkable caverns. The guides who led our descents had their own variations of a simple practice. When we reached the lowest level underground, they turned off all the lights.

The heavy darkness that followed is perfectly described by the old saying "I couldn't see my hand in front of my face." It doesn't take long for it to become suffocating, until every cell in our body longs for a flickering of light.

Psalm 19 says that nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun. The presence of God suffuses all things. If we think of this another way, we can mindfully choose to experience God in all our circumstances. I think of Viktor Frankl saying that even while he was imprisoned in Nazi death camps, his tormentors could not steal his joy at seeing the sun rise behind barbed wire.

As we become more mindful of the warmth of God's love, it banishes the darkness inside us. Perfect love casts out fear.

*Thank you, God, for the warmth of your love that envelops all things. Amen.*

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

## Pure reverence

*... the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever ...* — Psalm 19:9a

It has been said more than once that there is very little purity in this world. Human pollution taints our ecosystems. Societies are riddled with injustice and the corruption of power. Even the holiest among us are prone to self-serving motives.

And yet, this verse from Psalm 19 speaks of a purity we can all experience. The Hebrew word *yare*, most often translated as fear, is more aptly described as reverence. So, to rephrase this verse: reverence for God is pure, enduring forever. Translated in this way, Proverbs 9:10 says, "Reverence for the Lord is the beginning of wisdom . . ."

Awareness of God's radiant presence brings us into this state of devotion. It becomes pure because it pushes out competing preoccupations and makes way for the Spirit. It endures because it lifts us into a state of mind in which we are cognizant of eternity, not just our temporal span on this earth.

We live in a world where so much of the sacred has been stripped from our lives. When we become people of purer worship, we also become the salt and light that Jesus calls us to be.

*O God, fill us with reverence for you. Amen.*







SATURDAY, MARCH 16

## The X-ray of mindfulness

*But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. — Psalm 19:12*

Jesus angrily denounced religious practices that satisfy outward obligations but never get to the heart of our motives. He described the Pharisees of his day, who often felt superior because of adherence to purity laws. But Jesus insists that we examine our hearts.

But who can really do this? Are we capable of seeing the fullness of what separates us from God, those qualities we often label sin? We all have blind spots.

This is one of the great truths of becoming more mindful. It opens us up to the X-ray of God's presence. It is the Spirit, not our own willpower, that reveals to us the areas in which we need to get back on track.

In the closing words of Psalm 139, David made himself vulnerable by praying these words: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

*O God, reveal the deepest motives of our hearts and lead us back to you.  
Amen.*



# Second week in Lent

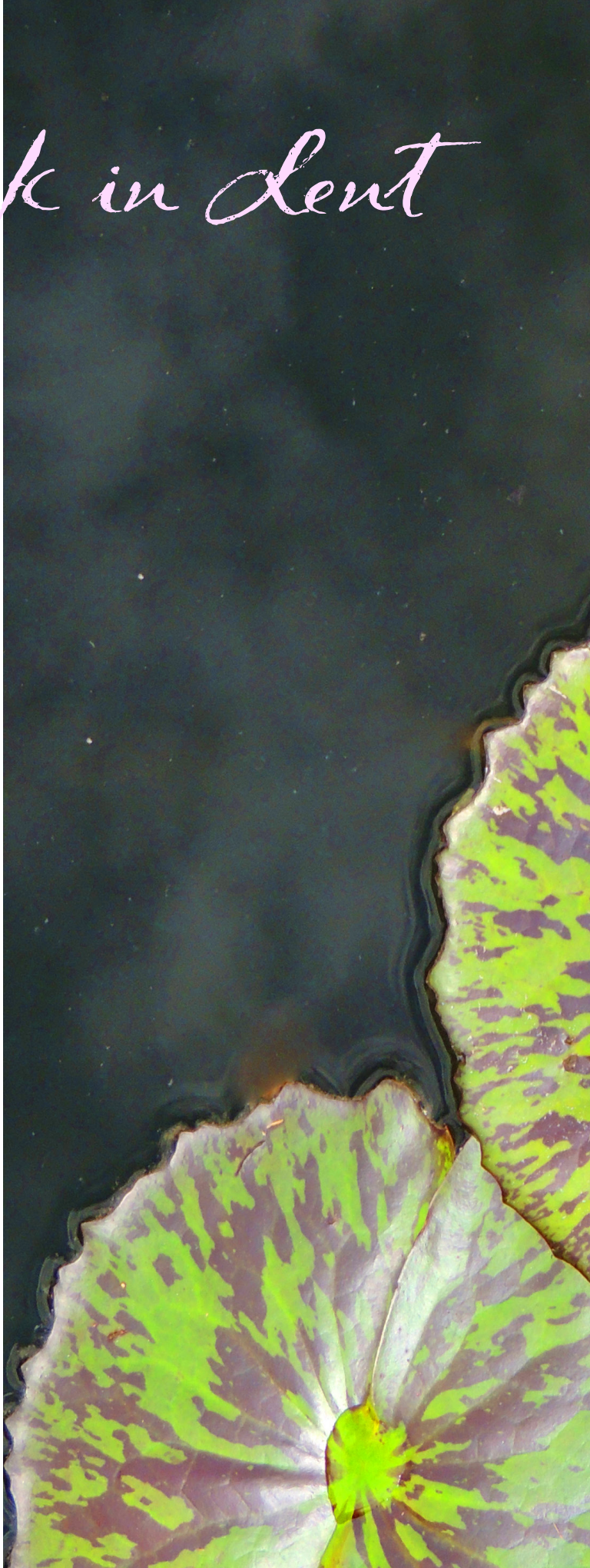
SUNDAY, MARCH 17

**This week's theme: Still waters**

*Psalm 23*

Many of us rarely experience stillness in our lives. Plugged into media devices, surrounded by a cacophony of noises, and ruled by the dictates of our schedules, we often neglect our sabbath needs. We forget that we are created to rest as well as work.

Psalm 23 has transcended the pages of Hebrew Scripture to become a universal piece of literature. Though it is so familiar that many of us can recite it verbatim, it continues to offer new depths of truth. We continue our Lenten journey this week through these cherished verses.







## VISIO DIVINA

### GUIDED MEDITATION

*Sitting beside "still waters" can be restorative.*

*Take a few minutes now to sit and pray with art.*

*Clear your mind, close your eyes and repeat, "Be still."*

*Now open your eyes. What's the first thing you see?*

*Stay with that. Don't let your eyes wander.*

*Spend a few minutes pondering that part of the picture.*

*After a few minutes, gaze at the entire picture.*

*How has God's stillness centered you?*

*Close your meditation with a prayer of thanks to God.*



MONDAY, MARCH 18

## No more 'thneeds'

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. — Psalm 23:1*

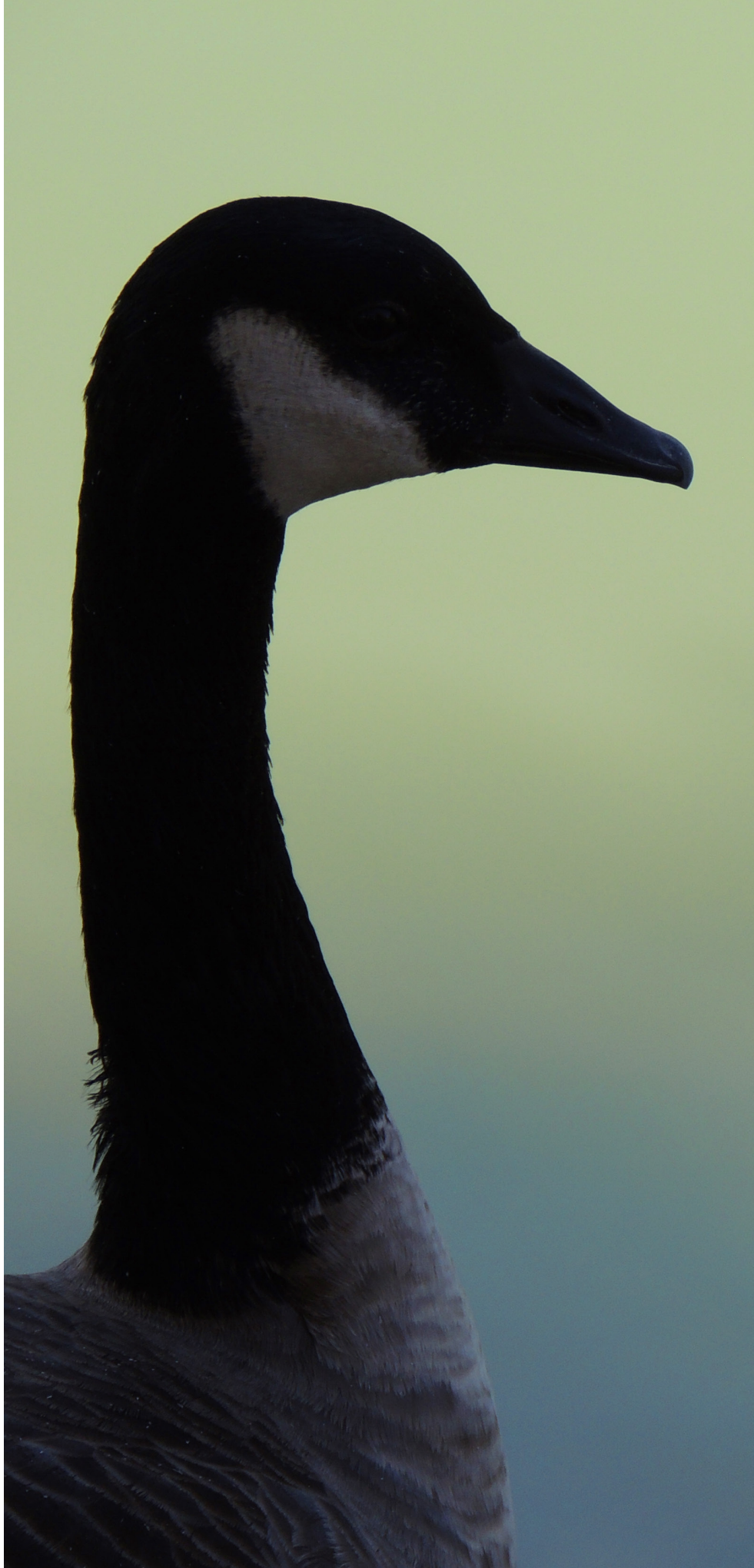
In his beloved children's book *The Lorax*, Dr. Seuss coined the word "thneed." Thneeds are things we think we need, but really don't. Things that occupy our hearts and minds but have no lasting value. The Buddha spoke often of these desires as illusory attachments that ultimately cause suffering.

The very basis of our capitalistic society is to stir desire for more, better, faster. Covet this, then buy it, if you really want to feel complete and up to date.

What is it you think you need to such an extent that it clouds the precious moments of your life? The approval of others? An elusive milestone that somehow justifies your existence? More material objects? The control of a situation or person? The need to be right?

David gets to the heart of these cravings with the very first verse of Psalm 23. When we trust that God is guiding our lives like a divine shepherd, we can let go of our cares. We become mindful of these covetous whims and learn to release them with childlike trust.

*Today, O God, help us find our contentment and serenity in you. Amen.*





TUESDAY, MARCH 19

### Our need for wildness

*He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. — Psalm 23:2–3a*

John Muir once said, “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity.”

Sociologists describe our lives as having a “nature deficit.” We spend too much time indoors, plugged into technology, and we pay a price. David says that God compels him to lie down in green pastures and find still waters. In our busy lives, we often miss these promptings, with the stress lodged in our bodies and the fragmentation of our thoughts.

Excursions to remote places are wonderful, but we don’t have to escape to mountains, seashores or green pastures to experience this wild necessity. We can find it in our backyards, a local park or by simply lifting our gaze to the clouds. We can close our eyes and listen to our breathing, that autonomic ebb and flow that is God’s wildness breathing through us. In these mindful moments, we reconnect with creation and surrender to the Divine’s urging.

*Good Shepherd, make us mindful of your promptings to lie down and experience your peace. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

### Back on the path

*He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake. — Psalm 23:3*

At midnight, under a full moon, I began my ascent of northern California’s Mount Shasta, foolishly ignoring the buddy system of alpine hiking. I felt I could make the difficult climb by myself, reaching the summit and descending before the danger of late-morning thunderstorms.

However, when I reached the camp just below the timber line, shadows from the forest obscured my view of the trail. I lost my way. I was alone at a high elevation with no one to offer directions. A shiver ran up my spine.

Then I remembered a video at the ranger station. “Look for the boulders that lead out of camp.” I scanned the horizon and, sure enough, there they were, like stairs. No, wait . . . like a stairway to heaven, given my momentary panic. I got back on the trail with a grateful heart.

Sometimes, in the fray of life’s challenges, we lose our bearings. We forget the spiritual path laid out for us. Awareness of God’s presence clears a path and leads us back to the Way.

*Divine Shepherd, when we go astray, show us your directions to the trail that leads to life abundant. Amen.*



THURSDAY, MARCH 21

## Assurance in the shadows

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me. — Psalm 23:4*

I love to lead people through a spiritual exercise. “Look back over your life,” I say. “Can you recall a time of hardship that now, in retrospect, is a clear example of God’s protective presence? Can you see how God brought you safely through that dark valley?”

Most people have clear examples of this deliverance. I know that I do, especially in my recovery from alcoholism. However, as the old adage says, hindsight is 20/20. The real genius of a mindful trust in God unfolds right here, right now, no matter our circumstances. David is not saying that someday he will look back and thank God for protection. He gives witness that now, even in the darkest valley, he will not fear. The Divine Shepherd “has his back.”

I call this “decreasing the lag time” when it comes to recognizing God’s good and powerful plan for our lives. It is a potent antidote to fear and anxiety. It gives assurance even in the gloomiest shadows.

*Loving God, give us trust that you are here, right now, no matter what is happening in our lives. Amen.*

FRIDAY, MARCH 22

## Overflowing

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. — Psalm 23:5*

A feast amid peril, a rich anointing of oil, a cup that overflows with goodness — what lavish descriptions of God’s love in our lives! As we practice new mindfulness, this awareness of abundance becomes a more regular backdrop to our daily existence.

There is also another way to think of an overflowing cup. It comes to us from Zen Buddhism. Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868–1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen. Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor’s cup full, and then kept on pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself. “It is overfull. No more will go in!”

“Like this cup,” Nan-in said, “you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”

Mindfulness empties us of self-centered preoccupations. It makes room for the overflowing presence of our Creator to fill us with joy and love.

*O God, pour out your Presence until we overflow with abundance to others. Amen.*







SATURDAY, MARCH 23

### What qualities attend us?

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long. — Psalm 23:6*

It is critical to take responsibility for our own happiness and inner peace. These inner states of spirit influence everyone around us. Our moods have ripple effects on our families, workplaces, churches and communities. It is one of the reasons that we seek to connect more gratefully with God's abundant presence.

This brings us to the beautiful crescendo of Psalm 23. If we trust God to meet every need, if we adhere to the discipline of finding green pastures and still waters, goodness and mercy will follow us. Our lives will shift from high-strung notes of anxiety and incompleteness until we find ourselves in harmony with the hymn of creation.

Don't we all want to be people who exude such goodness and mercy that we bring blessings to others around us? When this happens, we become ambassadors of abundance, bearers of the good news that God is working to illuminate our lives. May it be so . . .

*Good Shepherd, make us ambassadors of your abundance, beginning this moment. Amen.*





## VISIO DIVINA

### GUIDED MEDITATION

*How often do we worry about not having enough?*

*God, though, is a bounteous God.*

*Give thanks for God's bounty and gaze at the picture.*

*What is the first thing you notice?  
Focus only on that part of the picture.*

*What are you feeling? Hopeful?  
Grateful? Joyful?*

*Now gaze at the entire picture.*

*Where in your life can you be more mindful of God's provision?*

*Close your meditation with a prayer of thanks to God.*





# Third week in Lent

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

**This week's theme:**  
**Our bounteous provider**

*Psalm 65*

It originated in the mid-1500s, and today — nearly 500 years later — millions of Christian worshipers sing its familiar words each Sunday.

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below; praise God above, ye heavenly hosts; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!*

Truly, all blessings flow from our gracious Creator. However, it is one thing to give lip service to this truth, quite another to live within its awareness every day.

This week in our Lenten journey, we will walk through verses of Psalm 65.



MONDAY, MARCH 25

## All flesh

*O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come. — Psalm 65:2*

We human beings are enamored with our own cleverness. We have mapped the DNA genome, altered the genetic material of seeds, spawned creatures in petri dishes, and advanced the frontiers of artificial intelligence.

But none of us can re-create the original spark of life. That alone comes from God, and it is why all flesh must come back to our Source for sustenance.

Think of this. Every night while we float on a sea of dreams, our Creator continues to work within us. Our nails and hair keep growing, our hearts beat, our blood cleanses itself, our breathing rises and falls. These are simple but powerful reminders of what Paul said to an assembly of Athenian elders at the Areopagus in Athens: “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

How often do we take these everyday miracles for granted? Psalm 65 begins by reminding us of our essential dependence. It is the foundational truth for every other verse in this song.

*Spirit of the living God, help us yield more fully to you as you live through us. Amen.*

TUESDAY, MARCH 26

## From the mountains to the seas

*By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might. You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves . . . — Psalm 65:6–7*

From the summit of Mount Everest to the sea floor of the Marianas Trench, God created the sacred mountains and waters — stirring emblems of our Creator’s power. Both peaks and oceans contribute to the abundance of our world. Mountains act as watersheds, shelter abundant wildlife and help shape the planet’s weather patterns. The oceans, the primordial source of earliest life, also influence our climate and provide sustenance to countless people across the planet.

Our experiences of peaks and oceans remind us not only of the earth’s formation, but of God’s plan for our lives that was taking shape since the first dawn. The process of evolution continues in our souls. If we feel discouraged and need to remember this Divine plan, let us say with the writer of Psalm 121: “I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

*God of mountains and oceans, let your strength gird our lives today. Amen.*







WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

## Singing in the rain

*You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it ... — Psalm 65:9a*

Recently, I lived through one of the worst droughts in Texas history. The ground around our home gradually dried, turned to dust and then began to form large fissures. It looked like an alien landscape, shriveled and desperate for moisture.

When rains finally returned, I remember standing in our yard with my face lifted to the clouds. I felt a simultaneous sense of relief and deep gratitude. I was acutely aware of how dependent we are on God to “visit the earth and water it.”

In a 1972 television special, country singer Roger Miller said something that has made its way into popular culture, misattributed in countless memes: “Some people feel the rain. Others just get wet.”

In a folksy way, this captures the Lenten journey of mindfulness. We develop essential gratitude for God’s continued bounty. We feel it in the sunlight on our cheeks, the wind that tousles our hair, the thunder that booms over our valleys. We do not take these elements for granted, but in them see and feel the bounteous Presence that surrounds us.

*Today, O God, we will not take your provisions for granted. Amen.*



THURSDAY, MARCH 28

### Staffs of life

*... you provide the people with  
grain, for so you have prepared it.*  
— Psalm 65:9b

On a recent road trip, my wife and I traveled through Nebraska and Kansas and viewed vast fields of corn and wheat stretching out in the sunlight on each side of the highways. It was a reminder of why America is called “the breadbasket of the world.”

Grains and other basic foods are the staff of life. It is wheat in some cultures, rice or corn in others. I think of eating rice in the village of Munnar, India, or *nshima* (cornmeal) in Zambia. I remember walking through the open market in Cusco, Peru, marveling at the array of potatoes in dozens of shapes and colors. I saw the ruins of terraced farming at Machu Picchu, where Incas cultivated over 3,000 distinct varieties of this nourishing tuber.

As we give thanks for these staffs of life, we are also mindful of famines that periodically plague our planet. This is when we must remember our dominion, the trust God has given us to care for all of life. We must learn to share the bounty so freely poured out upon us, especially in our privileged, affluent society.

*Thank you, O God, for staffs of life that  
sustain us. Amen.*







FRIDAY, MARCH 29

### Girded with joy

*The pastures of the wilderness  
overflow, the hills gird themselves  
with joy ... — Psalm 65:12*

We think of joy as supercharged happiness, an elusive quality we seldom experience. But the Psalms, by linking joy with the sights and sounds of Creation, open a different truth. Joy is a natural response to God's bounteous goodness, part of what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit. It can infuse our days with praise.

One of the most gratifying results of mindfulness is the birth of this joy within us. Psalm 65 tells us that this quality "girds" us. "Gird" is an archaic word, meaning to encircle one's waist with belts necessary for battle. In reality, there is a battle going on in our world. Idolatries of nationalism and materialism vie to control our thinking. We are constantly tempted to put our trust, as Jesus said, "where moths and rust destroy."

Amid this, we can gird ourselves with joy. We can remember Nehemiah, rebuilders of the Temple, as he bolstered a remnant of Israelites fresh from Babylonian exile: "Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

*Creator God, may your joy flow into us  
and gird us for this day. Amen.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

### Harmony

*... they shout and sing together  
for joy. — Psalm 65:13b*

What a fitting climax to this hymn called Psalm 65! From the mountaintops to the oceans, from the pastures to the skies, all of life sings together for joy! And, as Henry Van Dyke's immortal lyrics call us, "Mortals join the happy chorus, which the morning stars began. Love divine is reigning o'er us, binding all within its span."

It is true in our families, our churches and our communities — we are better together. We are created for cooperation and harmony. Mindfulness teaches us this freeing lesson at ever-deepening levels. It shows us our interdependency not only upon each other, but upon every element of Creation that surrounds us. We are stitched into the fabric of life.

So much of Western thinking has set itself apart from nature, and thus, from God. We would do well to learn from other traditions, including the indigenous cultures of the Americas before they were decimated by colonialism.

Black Elk, a medicine man of the Oglala Lakota, said these words: "The first peace . . . is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers . . ."

*Today, O God, draw us into harmony  
with your Presence evident everywhere.  
Amen.*



# Fourth week in Lent

SUNDAY, MARCH 31

**This week's theme:**  
**All that is within us**

*Psalms 103*

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, written in the mid-1600s, appears woodenly orthodox through the lens of history. But its first question and answer (edited here for inclusion) provide a beautiful preface for any journey of faith.

**Question:** What is the chief end of humanity?

**Answer:** Humanity's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy God forever.

How many people in our modern world believe that this is our highest purpose — to glorify our Creator? So far, we have focused on the lavish gifts we receive. Now we concentrate more fully on our response. Let's continue our Lenten pilgrimage through the poetry of Psalm 103.







## **VISIO DIVINA**

### **GUIDED MEDITATION**

*Step away from the present moment and allow yourself to be awed by God.*

*Turn off your cellphone and come to the water.*

*What is the first thing you see?*

*Stay on that part of the picture that captured your attention.*

*Spend a few minutes pondering the image. Take note of what thoughts come to mind.*

*What are you feeling?*

*Now gaze at the entire picture.*

*How is your life glorifying God?*

*Close your meditation with a prayer of thanks to God.*



MONDAY, APRIL 1

### Every fiber

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

— Psalm 103:1

Somewhere along my spiritual journey, I heard this succinct description: Prayer is paying attention to all of God that we know with all of our selves that we know.

Our conceptions of both God and our own personalities will hopefully grow and expand over time, but this idea captures the heart of our opening verse from Psalm 103. Our journey with Psalm 65 focused on the blessings our Creator showers upon us. We now shift to how we can bless God in return.

Worship is never confined to one hour a week. Through practicing mindfulness, it becomes part of our daily consciousness. This is what Paul meant when he said “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He was not urging us to mumble verbal petitions all day. He meant something closer to what we talk about in the Twelve Steps (edited): “We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out.”

*Loving God, tune us to your Presence with every fiber of our beings. Amen.*

TUESDAY, APRIL 2

### Never forget

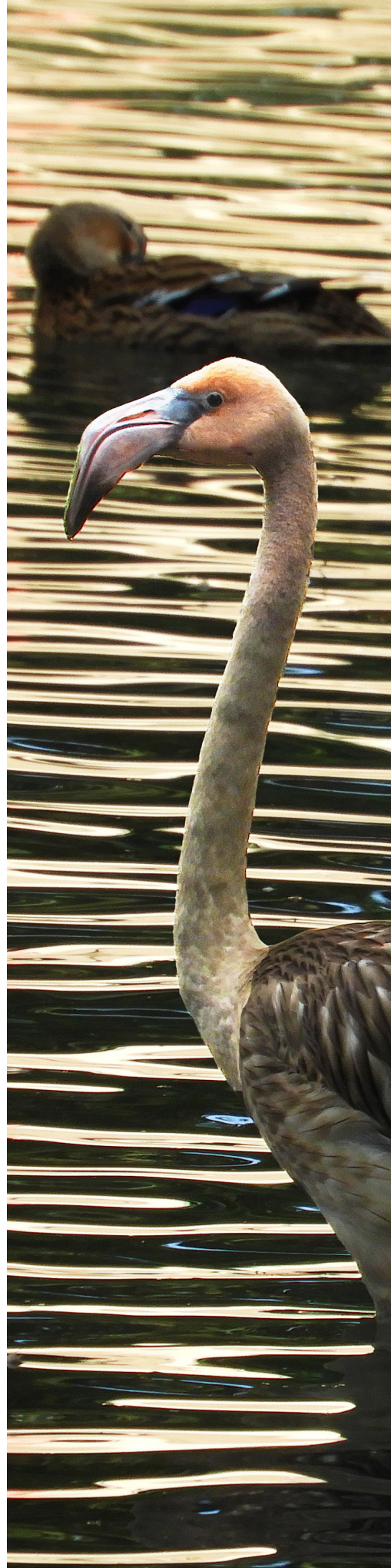
*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits — who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. — Psalm 103:2–4*

I have heard the testimonies of people who converted from fear-based, works-dominated religions to a newfound spirituality steeped in love and grace. This is a turning from theologies that emphasize the fall of humanity to those that celebrate the essential goodness of Creation.

Goodness? If we have any level of consciousness, we can look around us and easily enumerate the many ills and evils of our world. Racism, classism, violence, pollution, humanity’s inhumanity. But we are called to an undying hope. We are called to a vision of God’s abundance, a resurrection-infused, Spirit-led belief that the arc of history is leading inexorably toward justice, love and wholeness.

This wholeness lies at the heart of God, evident in how our Creator forgives, heals and redeems our lives. Be mindful of these benefits, says Psalm 103. Let them be the source of your daily gratitude and praise, your natural response to life.

*Today, God, I will bless you for your healing benefits in my life. Amen.*







WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

## Our part in the passion play

*The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.*

— Psalm 103:6

In his classic book *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Richard Foster says, “Just as worship begins in holy expectancy, it ends in holy obedience.”

Awareness creates obedience in many ways. We become finely attuned to those attitudes of heart and mind that need correction within us. We also see the world with new eyes, more clearly recognizing human intolerance. We see how the political and economic systems in which we live cause suffering and division. And, hopefully, we seek to bring about vindication and justice after the model of our Creator. Mindful obedience must lead to our part in the passion of Christ, our own role in working for the justice of those who are oppressed.

However, mindful people work for justice from a center of love and peace — the grace of the cross, the passive political resistance of Gandhi, the nonviolence of Dorothy Day or Martin Luther King Jr. Without this core conversion, we do not glorify the God of unity, but simply add our confusion to the Babel that surrounds us. We become the noisy gongs mentioned by Paul.

*God, as I work for justice, help me sow seeds of peace that truly last. Amen.*



THURSDAY, APRIL 4

## Abounding in love

*The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in  
steadfast love. — Psalm 103:8*

Mindfulness increases our awareness of the thoughts that swarm through us. Various theories try to quantify these brainwaves, with figures ranging up to 60,000 a day. That is a lot of traffic within our skulls. No wonder there is so much confusion in our world.

Between every one of these notions is a gap of stillness, a place where we realize our God-given ability to choose. Choice is paramount, and we have a Divine model to follow. This classic verse from Psalm 103 describes God in a way that defied the capricious, wrathful deities surrounding the Israelites in ancient Palestine. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

When we look at how human beings treat the planet and each other, this graciousness doesn't seem warranted. God showers it upon us nonetheless, a grace that culminates in the petition of Jesus as he hung on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

God calls us to model graciousness with others, so that we will glorify the model of our Creator.

*O God, help us choose to act mercifully  
and graciously today. Amen.*







## FRIDAY, APRIL 5

### Dust to dust

*For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust. — Psalm 103:14*

Of the many poetic reminders of our mortality, verses 14–16 of Psalm 103 are some of the most poignant. In the first, David says that God's forbearance toward us is rooted in a recognition that we are made of dust.

How does this concept change our worshipful response to others? The great commentator of yesteryear William Barclay gave a stirring image when speaking of the 10 lepers that Jesus healed in Luke. They were both Jew and Samaritan, natural enemies traveling together because of their shared condition.

Barclay said, "If floodwater surges over a piece of country and the wild animals gather for safety on some little bit of higher ground, you will find standing peacefully together animals who are natural enemies, who at any other time would do their best to kill each other. Shouldn't it be the same for all of us in our common need for God, seeking the high ground of his presence?"

Mindful people realize that our shared humanity binds us together despite artificial barriers of class, race and nationalism. We respond by seeking unity.

*O God, as we ponder our mortality, increase our compassion for all people. Amen.*

## SATURDAY, APRIL 6

### Gone with the wind

*As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone ... — Psalm 103:15–16*

I have a fascination with cemeteries. When I visit new cities, I often wander through their graveyards — from the elegant statuary of New Orleans, to the old graveyard of San Juan, to humble places of rest in the Texas countryside.

Recently, I came across a weathered headstone covered in lichen. I could barely read the inscription: *Infant Child of Mr. & Mrs. A. G. Haab, Born and Died, January 2, 1920, Only sleeping ...*

Unnamed child of God, you never knew the seasons of this life. You never loved, laughed or grieved. You never smelled a flower or lifted your face to the sunlight. You never wrestled with the questions of existence. And yet, your headstone cries out to each of us: Remember death, and through its portal, savor each moment of life!

I lay a rose at the headstone of baby Haab, then walked from the cemetery. A cloud blown by the wind raced across the sun.

*Loving God, as we become acutely aware of our short lives, let us glorify you and love others with all that is within us. Amen.*



# Fifth week in Lent

SUNDAY, APRIL 7

**This week's theme: Omnipresent**

*Psalm 139*

On the grounds of Maui's Palapala Ho'omau Congregational Church lies the gravesite of Charles Lindbergh. He was a man of extreme contrasts: a national hero, then a Nazi sympathizer; a consultant on war tactics, but also an environmentalist concerned with preserving species like the humpback whale. It was those gentle giants that brought him to Maui.

His simple gravestone has only two chiseled inscriptions:

*Born Michigan 1902, died Maui 1974*

*If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea*

The latter comes from Psalm 139, attributed to David, an epic song celebrating the omnipresence of God. It serves as the source of our theme this week.

Let's continue our journey ...

## VISIO DIVINA

### GUIDED MEDITATION

*God's love toward you can be seen everywhere.*

*But how often do you stop and notice how God is with you?*

*Begin right now and enter the picture.*

*There are many trees, but what do you first see?*

*Stay with that part of the picture. What colors are vivid?*

*What shapes do you now notice? What textures?*

*Spend a few minutes pondering the image.*

*Take note of what thoughts come to mind.*

*What are you feeling?*

*Now gaze at the entire picture.*

*As you begin to leave your time of prayer, think about how to become more aware of God's presence in your life every day.*

*Close your meditation with a prayer asking God to help you keep seeing with the eyes of the heart.*







MONDAY, APRIL 8

## The deepest knowing

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. . . . Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.*  
— Psalm 139:1–2,4

There is a distinct difference between believing in God as an abstract concept — the spark of the Big Bang — and believing that God is personally involved in our lives. This is the most breathtaking quality of Psalm 139. Not only is God omnipresent, but as David said earlier in Psalm 8, our Creator is personally aware of our tiny lives every second of every day.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. God's compassion for us is deeper than what we have for ourselves. Paul spoke of this in Romans, chapter 8, saying, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

Seen in one light, the journey of mindfulness is a discipline to align ourselves with this inmost knowing and compassion, the wellspring of fullness and joy.

*O God, align ourselves with the deepest knowledge of how to live our lives.*  
*Amen.*







**TUESDAY, APRIL 9**

### **Here, there and everywhere**

*Where can I go from your spirit? Or  
where can I flee from your presence?  
... If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the  
sea, even there your hand shall lead  
me ... — Psalm 139:7, 9–10a*

When David asks, “Where can I flee from your presence?” there are many of us who might echo this phrase with frustration. We would prefer to hide dark thoughts and actions completely. We may do so from others, but we can never hide from God.

I’m not talking about an overwrought conscience. I mean that gentle, loving Presence that breathes through us, looks through our eyes, and beats with our hearts. We can resist its pull toward harmony and light, or we can surrender and find the ancient path that God lay out for all of humanity.

The more we resist God’s purposes, the more we struggle. In her own inimitable way, a Twelve Step friend of mine put it this way: “In my willful stubbornness, I used to believe that the Universe was conspiring against me. Now, as I learn to let go, I believe the Universe is conspiring for me. Every day brings surprises!”

*Thank you, God, for your continued  
presence in all aspects of our lives.  
Amen.*

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10**

### **The light shines in the darkness**

*If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover  
me, and the light around me become  
night,” even the darkness is not dark  
to you; the night is as bright as the  
day, for darkness is as light to you.  
— Psalm 139:11–12*

There is no teacher like experience. For years, when faced with the struggles, griefs and tragedies of people I pastored, I lifted up a variation of John 1:5 — that God’s light shines in the darkness and the darkness will never overcome it. We may not see the resolution as we stumble in the shadows, but God is still with us.

Then came the bleakest time of my life, a season of brokenness and self-destruction. It was like a freefall through darkness, only to discover that God’s arms were waiting to catch me.

This is one of the truths in Psalm 139. God is present even in our periods of despair, working to heal and restore us. As one of the promises in Alcoholics Anonymous says, “We came to believe that God was doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” What a comforting truth to live with!

*O God, who is present even in our trials,  
we give you praise. Amen.*



THURSDAY, APRIL 11

## Reverently created

*I praise you, for I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made . . .*

— Psalm 139:14a

These words are a powerful declaration that reverence is reciprocal. When David joyfully exclaims, “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,” translate the word “fearfully” as “reverently.” When we do, just think of the power of this verse. The One we revere has shown that same honor to us in the intricate way we are created!

Clearly, we are called to return this reverence for all of Creation, especially with our fellow human beings. We need to recall and cherish the *imago dei*, the image of God within each of us. How often our world forgets this divine identity that lies within each of us! Instead, we continue to divide ourselves along fault lines of class, race, nationality and political ideology. None of us seem immune to this sin.

When you are tempted to judge another person, remember this acronym: SNAP — Stop, Notice, Attend and Pivot. Stop the judgment. Notice what you are feeling, thinking, saying to yourself. Attend (pay attention) to what triggered this emotional response of judgment — a previous experience, a painful memory, a fear or resentment. Pivot to consider that this person who is provoking judgment in you is also made in God’s image.

*O Spirit, thank you for the reverence you showed in creating our unique, one-of-a-kind lives. Amen.*

FRIDAY, APRIL 12

## Even at the end

*I come to the end — I am still with  
you. — Psalm 139:18b*

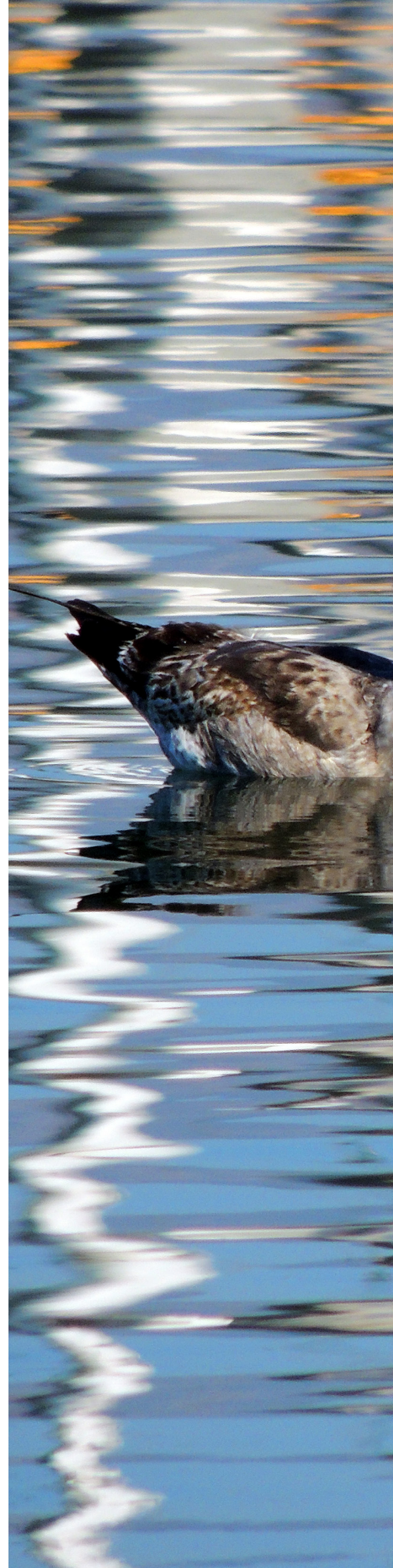
For years, in addition to my parish duties, I served as a hospice chaplain. It was such a privilege to attend to God’s children in the final hours of their lives. I was there to comfort them and their families, but they often blessed me far beyond my expectations.

All of us are equally precious to God, but I can say something without reservation. There are good deaths and bad deaths. I am not discounting tragedy, just sharing an observation about those who died with a consciousness that God’s love enveloped them.

I think of Marsha as she called her grandchildren to her bedside less than 24 hours before she died. With her baldness gleaming from rounds of chemotherapy, she placed her frail hands on each of their heads and gave them a blessing of love, words that would linger throughout their lifetimes.

I think of Ruth just hours before her death. I was holding her hand when she turned, recognized me, and said, “Don’t worry, Pastor Krin. I’m going across the Jordan to meet the Lord.”

*Loving God, as we or our loved ones  
near the end, may we be filled with your  
love that transcends time. Amen.*







SATURDAY, APRIL 13

### A daily reprieve

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*  
— Psalm 139:23–24

Before we enter Holy Week with a celebration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, it is fitting to remind ourselves of these final words from Psalm 139.

Spiritual growth continues throughout our lives. This is often the problem with creeds and doctrines. As my Millennial son, Pieter, says about his circle of friends, "We are reluctant to make statements of faith because they calcify that part of our brain that seeks new understanding."

In my own recovery process, there is a truth from the AA Big Book that guides me. "What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition."

To me, this perfectly describes the journey into mindfulness. By practicing a reverent and grateful awareness of God's Presence, we banish fear, resentment and stress. We return to the serenity and joy that is our birthright. It is a process that certainly gets easier, but we practice it one day at a time.

*Loving God, keep us from getting ahead of or behind your guidance. Help us rest in your Divine Presence. Amen.*









# Holy Week

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY, APRIL 14

## **This week's theme: The living Word of God**

We know virtually nothing of his life before he began his three-year ministry. We do know that he was well-acquainted with Scripture, most likely tutored by his parents. Throughout the Gospels we see how he freely and succinctly referred to the spiritual truths of his ancestors.

As we move into the final days of Jesus' passion, we will see how the Psalms gave voice to his purposes even until his final moments on the cross. Let's continue the final leg of our journey.

## **VISIO DIVINA**

### **GUIDED MEDITATION**

*Holy Week is here. The cross is near.*

*Now more than ever, we need God's living Word to give us strength.*

*Today, challenge yourself to take more time in prayer. If you have been praying with art for three to five minutes, extend that time to 10 to 15 minutes.*

*Take time to be with God as Jesus often did.*

*Find a quiet space. Let's begin.*

*What attracts you to this picture?*

*What part of the picture do your eyes rest on?*

*As you focus on that part, what do you feel?*

*What are your thoughts?*

*Now gaze at the entire picture.*

*What do you want to say to God?*

*Close your meditation by thanking God for being with you on your journey.*



MONDAY, APRIL 15

## From the mouths of babes

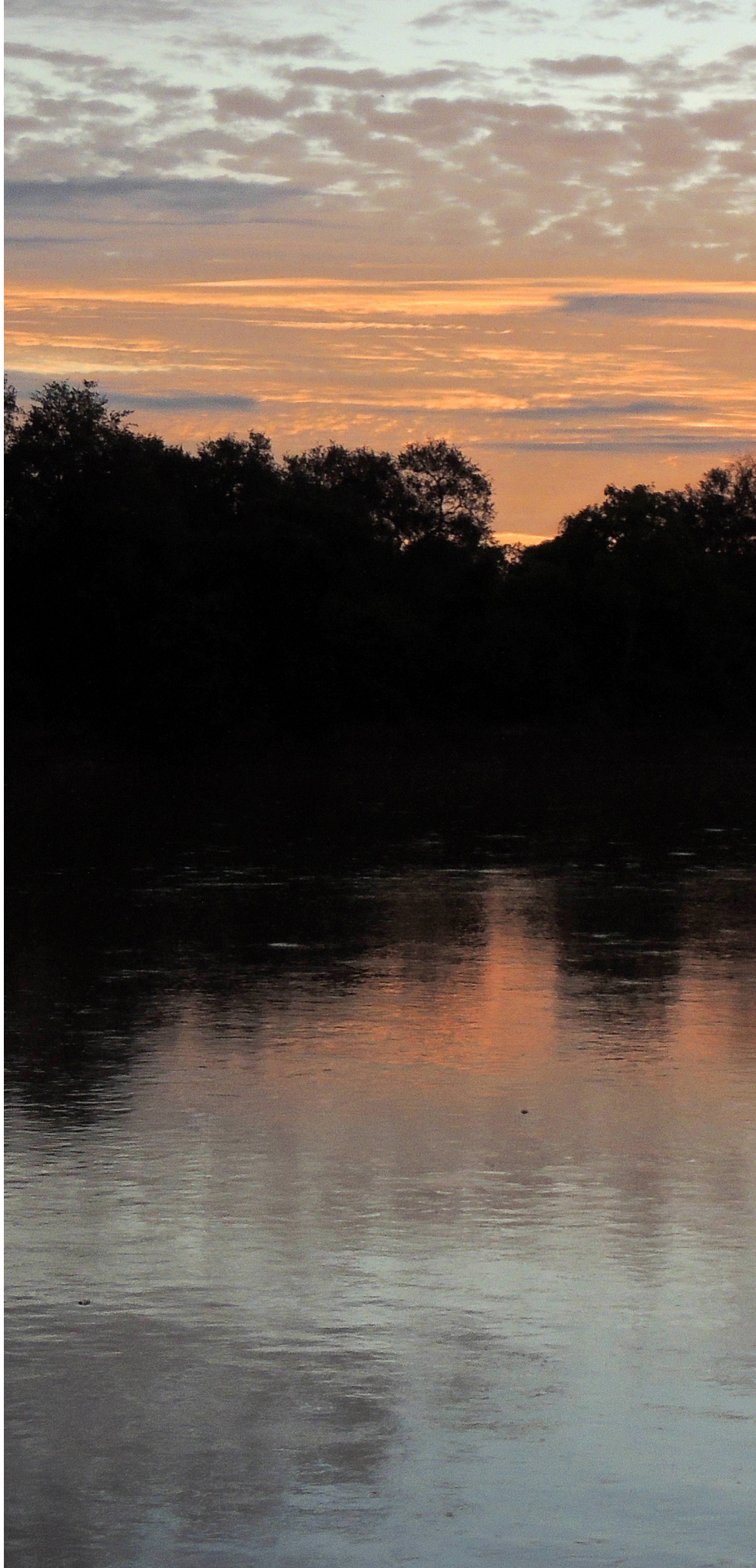
*Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. — Psalm 8:2*

In Matthew, Jesus goes to the Temple immediately after his triumphal return to Jerusalem. With fiery zeal, he overturns the tables of moneychangers who have turned its courts into a swap meet. The blind come to him there and he heals them. Meanwhile, the children who were present at entry are still shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The chief priests and scribes, intent on silencing the Nazarene any way they can, exclaim, "Do you hear what they are saying?"

"Yes," says Jesus. "Have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?'"

Psalm 8, slightly altered, comes naturally to Jesus' mind and lips during a time of stress and confrontation. Moreover, his interpretation is fascinating. He defines the bulwark — the protection mentioned by David — as praise. It is a profound reminder that praise and gratitude are what silence the enemies of our spirit.

*O God, as we follow Jesus through this week of his passion, let us learn the power of your living word in both his life and ours. Amen.*







TUESDAY, APRIL 16

## The power of the unexpected

*The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. — Psalm 118:22–23*

After spending the night in Bethany just outside Jerusalem, Jesus returns in the morning, knowing full well that his ministry is inflammatory to the religious leaders intent on crucifying him. He tells the parable of the two sons and the parable of the wicked tenants to the crowds, highlighting the hard-hearted rejection of his ministry by those in power. He sums up his message with these words from Psalm 118.

The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. A carpenter from the backwater town of Nazareth, born in a feeding trough, has become the Messiah.

Here is the miracle of the gospel story. God can take that which is humble and rejected by the world and use it for great purposes. The voices of those long silenced can become the prophecies that lead us to justice.

Jesus' rejection will continue until he is crucified outside the city, on a hill over a garbage dump, between two criminals. The story still amazes.

*God, thank you for lifting the lowly and bestowing power on that which the world rejects. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

## Children of God

*I say, "You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you . . ." — Psalm 82:6*

Though the religious leaders tried to convince Pilate that Jesus was inciting an insurrection, the most serious charge against him, in their minds, was blasphemy. How could he claim to be the one foretold by the prophets, the very Son of God!

John, chapter 10, shows Jesus arguing with these leaders about his own divine status. He quotes this mysterious verse from Psalm 82. God is in an assembly of other "gods," which most scholars believe are meant to symbolize the leaders of Israel. "You are all gods," says Yahweh, "children of the Most High."

What does the Psalmist — and Jesus — mean? Certainly not that we are gods with a capital "G," but that we, like Jesus, are both human and divine. It is when we forget our divine presence within us that we succumb to behaviors that harm ourselves and others. We forget to see that we are bound not only by our common humanity, but also by our common divinity.

*As we struggle in the flesh of this mortal life, O God, remind us again and again of our divine nature. Amen.*



## MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 18

### The bread that sustains us

*... he rained down on them manna to eat, and gave them the grain of heaven. — Psalm 78:24*

On this day we call Maundy Thursday, we see Jesus sitting with his disciples at a Passover seder in Jerusalem. It is at that meal that he inaugurates a new way of remembering him through the cup and the bread.

Bread was symbolically central to Jesus' ministry. In John, chapter 6, after feeding the 5,000, he finds the crowds following him with expectations of further handouts. He points them to God as their source, using Psalm 78 to remind them of the manna that rained down in the wilderness.

Then he utters these immortal words: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Though the meaning of this symbol can never be theologically exhausted, think of it in terms of our journey into mindfulness. When we learn to live with the trust, love and passion shown to us by Jesus, our cravings for this world are replaced by a hunger for God that can be satisfied.

*Jesus, Bread of Life, let your teachings, your actions and your passion fill us with the nourishment of your presence. Amen.*

## GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 19

### The darkest hour

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? — Psalm 22:1*

There are countless ways to enter Jesus' passion. Surely, one of these is to feel profound empathy for his willingness to complete his mission. Not even the threat of torture could deter him from proclaiming a new way of being in relationship to God and each other.

In his dark moments on the cross that altered human history forever, his agony reached its peak. Once again, as he did so many times in his short life, he turned to the Psalms to express himself. This time with the opening words of Psalm 22, attributed to David, an anguished cry of one who feels separated from his Creator. The Gospels symbolically describe this as darkness covering the entire earth.

Some believe that Jesus recited these words simply for comfort. How could God incarnate feel separate from God? My response is simple. Unless Jesus had experienced the same terrible aloneness so many of us have felt as human beings, he would not be a Savior who truly understands us.

*Jesus, we stand in awe of your willingness to finish God's mission. Amen.*







**HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 20**

### **Into your hands**

*Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God. — Psalm 31:5*

I see the fullness of the Incarnation in Jesus' saying, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

Just days before, he had railed at those plotting his death, calling them vipers and whitewashed tombs. Then, after they had him savagely beaten and crucified, he utters timeless words of forgiveness. I believe that in that moment, Jesus understood the completeness of his mission. He allowed his divinity to free him from the age-old karmic chain of action and reaction, giving all of us hope. We see the love that flows from the heart of God, a liberating love that transcends human categories. We, too, are called to love without measure, a lifelong pilgrimage of mindfulness that shapes us into the image of Christ.

It is no wonder that as he released the final restraints of hostility, Jesus quoted from Psalm 31:5, recorded in Luke 23:46: "Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last."

*Jesus, we offer eternal gratitude for your revelation of a love that extends to all people, even our enemies. Amen.*



# Easter Sunday

APRIL 21

## Everything that has breath

*Psalms 150*

On this day filled with shouts of "Alleluia, he is risen!" we come to the end of our journey into mindfulness through the Psalms. How fitting to close with the final song of the psalter, a majestic hymn of praise. Let's read it in its entirety:

"Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

Everything! The stars and galaxies, wind and rain, mountains and seas, trees and vineyards, every living creature! Human beings with all that is within us — our hearts, minds and spirits! Together, let all of Creation glorify our Creator! Empowered by the risen Christ, let us continue to reflect God's presence to the world around us!

*Loving God, on this day that we celebrate Christ's triumph over death, fill our lives with resurrection power! Amen.*



















# Walking with Beauty

## **About the Author and Photographer**

Krin Van Tatenhove has been an ordained Presbyterian pastor for more than 30 years, with experience as a hospice chaplain, substance abuse counselor in both Nevada and Texas, and writer for newspapers and magazines. He is the co-author of *Neighborhood Church: Transforming Your Congregation into a Powerhouse for Mission*.

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*Presbyterians Today*

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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