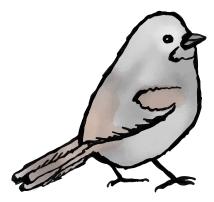


# 40: Discovering Lent



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# 40: Discovering Lent

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# WELCOME TO LENT

The book you are holding in your hands has been created for **two purposes:** 

1. To help people of all ages discover (or rediscover) Lent;

2. To help you dive deeper into the "I Am..." sermon series and Lenten content.

To that end, these stories have been adapted into plain language, for easy reading, for *all* ages. Passage references are included at the back of the book if you would like to read the stories in their original format!

Activities for kids and families are included throughout, as well as reflection questions for each week.

We hope you will be encouraged in this season. We are praying for your Lent – no matter how you observe these six weeks, may you be blessed by the knowledge that every day leads us closer to the promise of Easter.



## THE STORY BEGINS

People start stories in lots of different ways, like "Once upon a time..." or "A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away..."

But this is a special story. A true story.

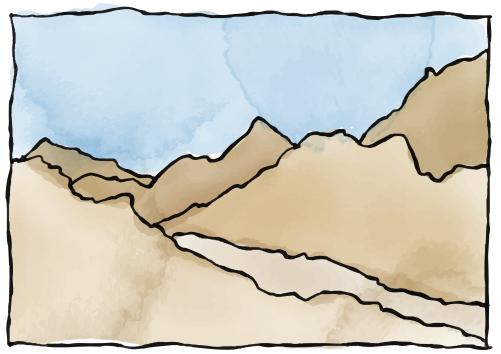
It is not a fairy tale, and its only stars shone long ago over a place we call Israel.

This is the story of our God who came to earth; our God who became a man so He could breathe and walk, laugh and cry, live and die and–

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

This is the story of Lent

and it begins in a wilderness.



# THE WILDERNESS

Before Jesus began His ministry to God's people, He wanted to spend time with God, so He went into the desert alone. Not for one day, or two days, but for forty days!

Deserts are dangerous places to wander. They're dry, which means that not much can grow there, so there's nothing to eat or drink. While He was the wilderness, Jesus fasted from food, which meant He didn't eat anything. Instead, He spent His time praying.

At the end of the forty days, Jesus was exhausted and famished. In His weakness, He was confronted by the devil and tempted to choose His own comfort, pride and power instead of following God's plan. But each

time, He chose the way of God.

#### Today,

many Christians set aside the forty days before Easter to remember Jesus' forty days in the wildnerness. These forty days

## What is Fasting?

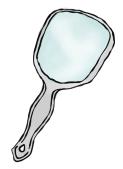
"Fasting" means that you commit (or 'hold fast') to giving up something you enjoy as a way to spend more time talking to God without distractions. Some people fast from food, others fast from electronics or entertainment. Fasting doesn't make you better or more holy – it's just a way to focus on God.

(minus Sundays!) are called "Lent." This is a time for all of us to focus on the story of Jesus and prepare for Easter.



### Reflection

- Do you want to observe Lent? If so, how?
- Look up the following verses in Scripture: Joshua 5:6; Exodus 34:27-28; Genesis 7:12; and Jonah 3:4. What do these passages have in common? How do they relate to Lent?



#### Is Lent in the Bible?

Lent as we understand it isn't in the Bible -- it began in the Early Church as a way for us to remember what the Bible says about Jesus and his time here. The word "Lent" comes from the Old English word "Lencten," which meant "Springtime." Spring was called "Lencten" because the days were getting longer ("lengthening")!

### ASH WEDNESDAY March 1

The forty days of Lent begin with Ash Wednesday. On this day, people go to church and the pastor places ashes on everyone's foreheads.

#### Why ashes?

Ash doesn't have any special powers - we put it on our fore-head because:

## Did you know?

Ash Wednesday began way back in the Middle Ages. People would show that they needed God's forgiveness by pouring ashes on their head.

- "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" is an old phrase used in the Church. It reminds us that God created us from dust, and that nothing physical lasts forever.
- In the Old Testament, people would put ashes on their head as a way to show that they were sad. Putting it on our foreheads is a way to show that we are sad about the wrong and hurtful things we've done.

Traditionally, people observe Lent in three ways:

- Prayer (talking to God)
- Fasting (temporarily giving up something you love)
- Alms-giving (helping other people)

Remember: Praying more, fasting and helping people doesn't make God love us better -- it's just a way for us to remember that Lent is a special sea-son! God's love for you never changes, <u>no matter what.</u>

### Reflection

#### For students & adults:

Lent is not a call to be pious, but an opportunity to reset our priorities. What are some good things in your life that may be distracting you from leaning into the story of God?

#### For kids & families:

Read the story of Jonah and the city of Nineveh (Jonah 3:1-10). What were the signs that the people of Nineveh used to show their repentance? Activity: Prayer Chain (see back of book for details)



### INVOCABIT SUNDAY March 5

John the Baptist really didn't want to baptize Jesus.

"I shouldn't baptize the Son of God!" John told Jesus, "You should baptize me instead."

Normally, people were baptized to show that they wanted God to forgive their sin, but John knew that Jesus hadn't sinned. Even though John was trying to do something good, Jesus knew what was best. He insisted that John baptize Him, and that's exactly what happened.

For Jesus, being baptized showed everyone that God was on their side. It was the beginning of His three-year-long ministry – three years that would change the whole world.

The name of this Sunday comes from the Latin word "invocabit" (EEN-voh-KAH-beet), which means "when they call." This week's verse Psalm 91:15 ~ "When they call to me, I will answer them." Today, we remember that God loves to forgive. He is faithful and always with us! God is our source of true satisfaction.



### Why Do Some Lenten Sundays Have Latin Names?

The Roman Empire ruled many nations during and after Jesus' ministry. Because of this, many people who eventually followed Jesus read the Bible in Latin, the language of the Romans. It's still used in some churches today! "Invocabit" is Latin for "When they call," – the first part of today's verse! All but two Sundays in Lent have Latin names from the week's verse.

### Reflection

#### For students & adults:

This week's sermon is titled "I Am the True Bread" and is based on Christ's words in John 6:35.

- Christ promises strength and satisfaction to those who follow him. Where have you found this to be true? When does this feel like it isn't true?
- Christ is not just present in our longings, he transforms them (and us) along the way.
   What is a longing in your life that you want God to transform?
- Read and reflect on Psalm 91:15.

#### For kids & families:

- Read Matthew 3:13-17. What made this baptism so special?
- Have you ever made a mistake? What do you do when you make a mistake? How do you treat someone when they make a mistake?
- Activity: Create an alms giving box and choose an organization to support. As a family, save all of your change during Lent by putting it in your family box. (See back of book for details.)

### REMINISCERE SUNDAY March 12

Nicodemus loved to learn. As a Pharisee, he spent his life learning everything he could about God.

But the way Jesus talked about God surprised Nicodemus. Jesus taught that a person had to be born again to see the Kingdom of God.



When Nicodemus heard this, he had some big questions.



Nicodemus didn't want to be seen publicly with Jesus, so he waited to until it was nighttime before he started a conversation.

"I know you are from God," he told Jesus. "But how can someone be born more than once?

Jesus explained: "When a person is born the first time, they have a body that you can see and touch. When you follow God, you are born again; your spirit is made alive by something you can't see or touch – the Spirit of God."



Nicodemus had never heard this before!



He wanted to know more so he asked Jesus question after question, staying up late into the night to hear his new teacher talk about God.



This is the second Sunday of Lent. On this Sunday, many churches read Psalm 25:6 – "Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love."

The name of this Sunday comes from the Latin word "reminiscere" (REH-mee-nee-SER), which means "remember."

Today, we remember who God is and who God made us to be.

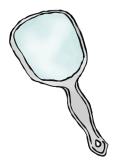
### Did you know?

When we see the Pharisees in the New Testament, they're almost always fighting with Jesus. But why?

The Pharisees believed that people needed to follow every single rule in the Jewish Scriptures, but Jesus taught that simply following God's rules didn't mean you were friends with God.

Jesus said that every single rule God gave could be summed up into two ideas: LOVE GOD AND LOVE PEOPLE.

This was hard for most Pharisees to understand – they thought Jesus was a false teacher. They thought attacking him was what God wanted.



### Reflection

#### For students & adults:

The title of this week's sermon is "I Am the Vine" (John 15:1-5.)

Read Prov 23:7 and reflect on the following:

- Where are you walking?
  - Where are you standing?
- Where are you sitting?
- What needs pruning?

#### For kids & families:

Read John 3:1-21. How do you choose God? What does it look like when God makes your spirit alive?

Jesus says that he is like the trunk of a tree and his followers are the branches that bear good fruit. If we follow God, then God's love grows in us.

Read Galatians 5:22-23. What are the "fruits" of being alive God's Spirit?

### OCULI SUNDAY March 19

Jesus taught a lot of people during His ministry. With His twelve disciples, He walked from place to place in the land of Judea – often to small vil-lages full of fishers and farmers.

Jesus knew that many people He taught were not educated. Some could not read at all. So Jesus spoke to God's people in ways they could understand. He knew they used candles and oil lamps as lights when it was dark.

Jesus was in Jerusalem for a holiday called Sukkot (soo-KOTE) and there were a lot of people there. One day, Jesus stood up to speak in the tem-ple.

"I am the Light of the World," He told everyone. "If you follow me, you won't ever walk in darkness. You'll have the Light of Life."

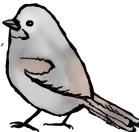
The people who heard him were amazed. "Who is this guy?" they won-dered. "How did he learn these things?"

The Pharisees heard Jesus speak and didn't like it, because many people began to believe what Jesus was saying: following Jesus – not rules – led to friendship with God!

### What is God's Light?

There are a lot of Bible verses about light. But what did Jesus mean when He said He was the light of the world?

Jesus wanted everyone to know that by following God, people would learn to see everything in life more clearly. Just like a light in a dark room, God shows us things we couldn't see otherwise.



The name of this Sunday comes from the Latin phrase "Oculi mei" (OH-koo-lee MAY) which means "my eyes." It comes from Psalm 25:15-16 -- "My eyes are ever toward the Lord." Today, we learn about the Light of the World.

> When we see life with God's light... we want to love God we see how much God loves us we want to love other people we want to fight for what's right

God is faithful and true – the Light of the world!

### Reflection

#### For students & adults:

This week's sermon is titled "I Am The Light" (John 8:12) • What does it mean to you to "walk in darkness," to "have the light of life"? What does it mean to follow Jesus?

• Leonard Cohen: "Ring the bells that still can ring / Forget your perfect offering / There is a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in." How is God's light revealed in our brokenness?

#### For kids & families:

- What does "darkness" look like in our world today?
- What does God's light show to us?
- What are practical ways you can show God's light to others?
- Activity: Candle decorating! (See back of book for details)



### LAETARE SUNDAY March 26

The Jewish people celebrated a lot of holidays! Their holidays remind-ed them how God had cared for them throughout their history – they didn't want to forget the goodness of God.

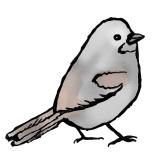
One of these holidays, Sukkot (soo-KOTE), lasted seven whole days. This holiday reminded the Jewish people of the way God provided for them when they were wandering in the desert with Moses.

To celebrate Sukkot, the priests carried water into the temple, then they poured the water out to show that they trusted God to give them more water. While they did this, they all yelled "Hoshiana!" ("Save us now!")

As if He was answering their prayer, Jesus stood up and said, "If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink! Rivers of living water will fill up anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says."

This caused an uproar! Some people heard this and said, "Jesus is the Messiah." Other people were furious -- they actually wanted to kill Jesus for claiming He was God.

## What does Messiah mean?

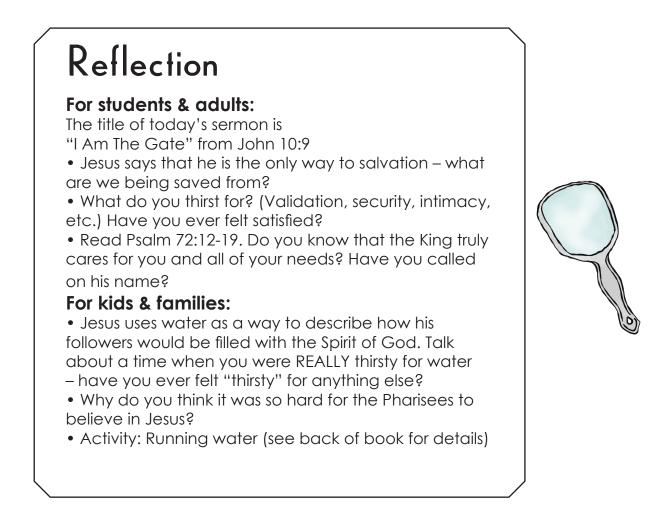


The word "Messiah" means "set apart by God." Throughout the Old Testament, the Jewish people were told that the Messiah would come to rule over Israel as its King. The Jews longed for Messiah because they believed He would be a great political leader who would overthrow the Roman Empire. The name of this Sunday comes from the Latin phrase "Laetare" (leh-TAH-reh) which means "rejoice," It comes from Isaiah 66:10 – "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her!" Historically, Laetare Sunday was a day when people relaxed from Lent to celebrate the good news of Jesus.

But when the Pharisees and priests told the temple guards to arrest Jesus, the guards wouldn't do it.

"Why not?" the priests and Pharisees demanded.

The guards simply answered, "No one spoke the way this man does." They were captivated by what Jesus said. Could He give them the living water of God? Could He be the Messiah?



### PASSION SUNDAY April 2

This Sunday is also called "Judica" Sunday. This name comes from the Latin phrase"Judica" (YOO-dee-kah) which means "judge." This week's passage is from Psalm 42 – "Judge me, O God." This is the first day of a two-week period called "Passiontide."

In a tiny mountain village called Bethany there lived a woman named Martha, her sister Mary and her brother Lazarus.

They were friends of Jesus and knew He was special. They listened to His teaching and believed He was the Messiah.

One day, Lazarus got very sick. Desperate for help, Martha wrote Jesus to tell Him. "He could heal my brother!" she thought.

But days passed. Martha and Mary worked day and night to nurse Lazarus, and still Jesus didn't come.

Then one day, Lazarus died.

Martha and Mary prepared Lazarus for burial and placed him inside their family's tomb – a simple cave in the hillside. They cried with their friends as a large stone was rolled over the door-way.



### PASSION SUNDAY April 2

And then, four days after Lazarus had been buried....

"Jesus is coming!" somebody called out.

Martha didn't waste a second. She ran to meet Jesus in the road.

"Lord, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died," she cried.

"Your brother will be raised up," Jesus assured her.

"I know that he will be raised up in the resurrection at the end of time..."

"You don't have to wait for the end of time. I am, right now, The Resurrection and The Life. If you believe in me, even though you die, you will live. And everyone who lives believing in me doesn't really die at all. Do you believe this?"

Martha nodded. "Yes. I've always believed that you're the Messiah, the Son of God."

Mary came out to greet Jesus, and when He saw her weeping He began to cry too. They led Jesus to where Lazarus was buried. "Move the stone," He told them.

Martha hesitated. "There will be a bad smell... he's been buried for four days." Jesus looked her in the eye.

"Didn't I say that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? Go ahead. Take away the stone."

They rolled away the stone.

### PASSION SUNDAY April 2

## Why is it called "Passion Sunday"

Passion Sunday begins Passiontide, which is the last two weeks of Lent where many Christians focus on the "Passion" of Jesus. Today the word "passion" could mean excitement, but the original word in Latin means "suffering" or "enduring."

Jesus prayed, "Father, I'm grateful that you have listened to me. I know you always listen, but for everyone standing here I've spoken out loud so that they can believe you've sent me." Then he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"

Everyone waited, watching the door of the tomb. For Martha, each second felt like an hour...

Suddenly, Lazarus appeared in the doorway!

He was wrapped from head to toe in grave clothes. Martha and Mary rushed forward to help their brother, astonished at what they'd just seen.

They had believed that Jesus was God, but now they had proof: their brother Lazarus, alive and breathing once more.

### Reflection

#### For students & adults:

The title of this week's sermon is "I Am The Good Shepherd" from John 10:11

• Even though Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the injustice of the world around us can make us cynical. What helps you remember God's promise to care for his people?

#### For kids & families:

• Activity: watch a clip from the Gospel of John film on YouTube from 1:30:35-1:38-54

• If Jesus knew that he could raise Lazarus from the dead, why did he cry?

• Martha and Mary told Jesus how said they were that he didn't come sooner. When you feel sad or mad, do you tell God about it?



# HOLY WEEK

The last week of Jesus' life was a busy one. Over and over, we see Him choosing to do things God's way. With every action, He writes a story of fierce, radical love.

Three years of ministry – walking from village to village, healing the blind, telling people about God's approaching Kingdom, had all led to this: the week-long Passover Feast in Jerusalem.

Passover was when God's people gathered to remember what happened for the Children of Israel when they were slaves in Egypt: they needed rescuing, and God led them to freedom. And the middle of this Passover, we see Jesus nearing the end of His time on earth.

Here is the conclusion of the first chapter in the story of Emmanuel. The last days of God-with-us in the person of Jesus – God wearing our clothes, breathing our air, bearing our dirt and standing in a crowd of the people He came to rescue.

This is the story of Easter, and it begins on a dirt road.



### PALM SUNDAY April 9

This is the last Sunday of Lent. On this Sunday, many churches read John 12:12-19. This Sunday is the seventh day of Passiontide and the first day of Holy Week

The day started the same as any other day: Jesus and the disciples were walking.

They were on their way from Bethany to Jerusalem when Jesus stopped. "Go get me a young donkey from the village," He told two of his disciples.

The disciples found it exactly where Jesus said they would. With Jesus on the donkey, they continued down the road toward Jerusalem.

As they traveled, word spread through the city below: Jesus –the man who raised Lazarus from the dead – is coming to Jerusalem! He is coming to free us from Rome!

As Jesus came closer to the city gates, a lot of people gave Him a royal welcome. They laid palm branches and coats across the road so the donkey's feet wouldn't touch the dirt. They yelled things like, "Blessed is this king who comes from God!" and "Save us!"

It was a happy sight, but it made the Pharisees furious. "The whole world is following this man," they seethed.

As people welcomed Him, word quickly spread that Jesus had come to the city. Shaken and unsure of what it all meant, the rest of Jerusalem waited and watched.

### MAUNDY THURSDAY April 13

Monday: Jesus cleanses the temple (Matt 21:12-17) Tuesday: Jesus talks about His death (John 12:20-36) Wednesday: Judas betrays Jesus (Luke 22:1-23)

In a rented room, Jesus gathered with the twelve young men who had been by His side for three years.

"I wanted to eat this Passover meal with you before I enter my time of suffering," he told them.



Why "Maundy"?

Maundy Thursday gets its name from the Latin word "mandatum," which means "command." After reading this story, see if you can guess why "command" is a part of this name!

"It's the last one I'll eat until we all eat it together in the kingdom of God."

He took a piece of bread and blessed it, then He broke it into pieces. "This bread is my body, given for you. Eat this as a way to remember me."

Then He did the same thing with the wine, saying, "This cup is the new covenant written in my blood – blood poured out for you."

Jesus' words made the disciples worry, but they still listened as He gave them one final command:

"Love each other the way I've loved you. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples – when they see the love you have for each other."

## The Lord's Supper

In church, you may have seen the Lord's Supper: people pray, then eat a small cracker and drink a tiny cup of juice. This is a way we remember what Jesus said: His body and blood were sacrificed for us.

## GOOD FRIDAY

April 14

Parents: Please see the back of this book for tips on how to talk to kids about Good Friday

#### Gethsemane

After Supper, Jesus and the disciples went to a garden called Gethsemane. Jesus knew that He was near the end of His life and He wanted a quiet place to pray.

For a little while, the garden was dark and quiet.

Then, from a distance – the sound of approaching footsteps.

The darkness of the garden was soon interrupted by the harsh light of torches carried by Pharisees, priests, and Roman soldiers. They came to a stop in front of Jesus.

"Who are you here for?" Jesus asked, knowing that they had come for Him.

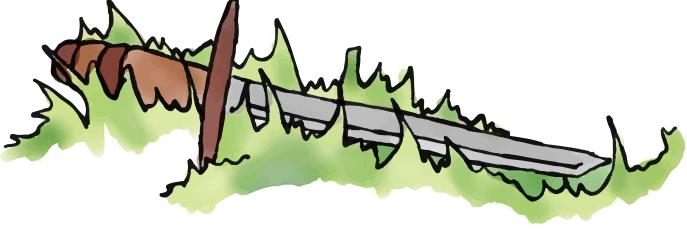
"Jesus of Nazareth," one of them answered.

"I am Jesus of Nazareth," Jesus told them. The soldiers paused for a moment, unsure of how to proceed. Peter, one of the disciples, tried to defend Jesus with a sword, but Jesus stopped him.

"Put your sword back!" He commanded.

The soldiers surrounded him as Peter watched. "Why is Jesus letting Himself be taken?" Peter thought frantically.

It was as if Jesus heard him. "This is what God has for me," He told Peter as the soldiers put Him in chains. "Do you really think I shouldn't do it?"



#### QUESTIONING

In the dark hours of the early morning, the priests and Pharisees gathered to question Jesus. These officials had warned Him to stop healing people and claiming to be God, but He hadn't listened.

Soldiers brought Jesus to stand before the officials. "Who are your followers?" the priest in charge demanded. "What have you been teaching them?"

"I've spoken openly to everyone," Jesus replied. "I've never said anything in secret, so why are you questioning me? Ask the people who heard my teaching. They know what I said."

This made the priests and Pharisees angry. They tried to think of ways to get the Roman leaders on their side so they could crucify Jesus.

As they plotted, Roman soldiers and people in the crowd began to hurt and mock Jesus. Soldiers struck at Him with sticks and whips, and onlookers shouted cruel things.

Jesus had the power to calm a stormy sea, give sight to the blind, and raise people from the dead. With just a word, He could have broken the chains on His wrists and overpowered everyone around Him.

But through all the pain and chaos, Jesus did not fight back.



#### TRIAL

As the sun rose, more people joined the crowd surrounding Jesus.

"Jesus of Nazareth is on trial!" newcomers were told. "The man who claimed He came to save us can't even save Himself."

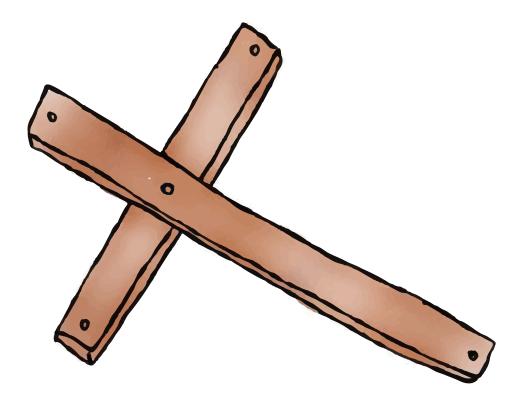
Many people who heard this got mad. They'd been tricked! This exhausted, injured man couldn't be the Savior of Israel. Surely the real Messiah wouldn't let himself be beaten by Roman soldiers!

By the time Jesus was brought in front of Pilate, the Roman Governor, the crowd was furious.

Pilate was confused. "This man hasn't done anything wrong," he told the angry crowd.

"Crucify Him!" they roared in response.

Pilate didn't want any trouble. He relented, watching as the angry mob followed Jesus and His captors to the outskirts of the city to be crucified.



#### CRUCIFIXION

On a hill called Golgotha outside the city walls, Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to a large wooden cross. His family and friends watched helplessly, sad and terrified. All around them, soldiers made jokes and played games to win pieces of Jesus' clothing. A few people from the crowd jeered.

Jesus was in agony, but He did not forget God's plan.

"Father," He prayed out loud. "Forgive these people. They don't know what they're doing."

Slowly, time passed. Morning turned to afternoon, and the crowd gradually lost interest. Many of them went back to the city until only Jesus' friends and His mother remained.

Suddenly, the afternoon sky grew very dark. On the cross, Jesus took one big, final breath--

"It is finished," He declared, His heart beating one last time.

Silence.

Suddenly, beneath the cross, the earth began to convulse in violent quakes. The people at Golgotha fell to the ground.

Nearby, the Temple's thick walls began to tremble. Terrified priests braced themselves, watching in horror as the giant temple veil that hid the Holy of Holies was torn down the middle by an invisible force.

And then everything went still.

The soldiers guarding Jesus were quiet. Stunned, they stared up at the cross. "He really was the Son of God," one of them realized out loud.

Stuck between the darkened afternoon sky and the now-silent ground, his fellow soldiers agreed.

#### BURIAL

Respectable people did not spend much time on the hill of Golgotha. It was a place for thieves and criminals.

But late Friday afternoon, two rich, respectable men – Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea – climbed Golgotha. They were friends of Jesus with one goal: to give Him a proper burial.

They took Him to the garden tomb that Joseph had bought for himself. It was cut out of a thick wall of rock. Jesus' friends laid Him inside and rolled a large stone across the opening.

Exhausted and grieved, they stood for a moment in the dusk. Then, with one last, long look at the tomb, they started back toward the city.



### Reflection

#### For students & adults:

Re-read the story, engaging your imagination as each scene unfolds. What do you see, hear, feel, smell, in each scene? What does all this mean to you? Allow the Spirit to speak to you through the story of Christ's sacrifice.

#### For kids & families:

See back of book for details.

### HOLY SATURDAY April 15

The day after Jesus' death, the city was quiet for the Sabbath day. Jesus' disciples and family remained in hiding, mourning their Rabbi together.

The priests and Pharisees were relieved. There was just one more thing to do to make sure Jesus' followers didn't try to start a revolution.

Several of these leaders went to see Pilate, "Sir, we remembered something that Jesus told people while He was alive," they informed the governor. "He said that when He was killed, He would come back to life after three days. Please put guards by His tomb to make sure that His followers don't steal his body so they can claim that He came back to life."

Pilate sighed. "Take a few soldiers to guard the tomb," he told them.

The priests and Pharisees went down to the tomb. They weren't happy with just having the rock rolled in front of the entrance, so they sealed the rock to make it harder to move. Then they returned to their homes, leaving a few soldiers in the garden to protect the tomb from thieves.

The Pharisees congratulated themselves. Finally, they wouldn't have to worry about Jesus of Nazareth.



People finish stories in lots of different ways, like "There you have it" or "They lived happily ever after..."

But this is a special story, because its ending isn't really an ending.

In fact, the story is still being written today.

It is the story of our God who did not abandon us, even after we abandoned Him.

Our God who came to live and die and live again so He could defeat the death that separated us from Him.

Our God who lets us help Him show love to others.

This is the story of the God who loves His people so much that He wants to be with us forever.

This is the story of Lent,

and it ends in a garden.



## EASTER: THE GARDEN

The disciples had been hiding in a dark room not far from the garden tomb, afraid of being turned into the authorities for following Jesus. They came and went quietly, their hearts heavy with grief and fear.

Jesus had told all of them that He would be crucified, but they hadn't really believed it. They'd watched Jesus perform miracles -- it had been hard to believe that someone with that much power could really die.

Peter was especially miserable. When Jesus was at his loneliest, Peter had denied knowing Him to the crowd to save his own skin.

A few days after Jesus' death, Peter was just beginning to stir from his sleep when a sudden banging against the door startled him. He froze, looking at John with wide eyes. Had soldiers come to arrest them?

Suddenly, they heard Mary Magdalene's voice on the other side of the door. "They've taken Jesus," she cried.

Forgetting their fear, Peter and John leapt to their feet. They dashed out of the house with Mary close behind them, running through the narrow streets, out the city gate and into the garden.



## EASTER: THE GARDEN



It was just as Mary told them: the great stone had been moved. Jesus was gone.

Panicked, Peter and John left, their minds racing with what to do next – they just needed a safe place to think.

But as their footsteps faded into the distance, Mary remained.

This was her second time at the tomb. Earlier that morning, the sunrise had just begun to creep across the sky when she had come to the tomb. The hem of her robe had grown damp from the morning dew.

She and a few other women had brought burial spices for Jesus, but they never had the chance to use them. Instead they had stood, shocked and trembling at the sight in front of Jesus' grave: unconscious Roman soldiers, a stone rolled away. An empty tomb.

She wept, overwhelmed by her grief. She had been an outcast with no friends and no purpose – Jesus had been the first person to show her kindness. And now He was gone.

## EASTER: THE GARDEN

"Why are you crying?" a voice behind her asked.

It's the gardener, she realized. Maybe he could help. "Jesus is gone," she replied. "Were you the one that moved Him? If you did, please tell me where you've taken Him."

"Mary," the man said. His voice sounded familiar.

For a moment, the only thing she could hear was her own breathing. She turned to face the man, her heart racing as the tears in her eyes fell away.

"Teacher," she gasped.

For there, standing before her, was Jesus. Alive!

Just as he had promised.



# ZÓÉ: A BENEDICTION

Zóé [dzo-ay];Greek, noun: life, both of physical (present) and of spiritual (future) existence.

Even before text messaging and Twitter, news traveled fast.

Through Mary Magdalene and the work of the remaining Disciples, the news of Christ's life, death, and resurrection spread quickly, traveling the roads of Emmaus and Damascus and much further, disrupting humanity like spilled ink across the fabric of history.

Because the Lenten story is more than an annual journey to Easter.

In Jesus, the promises of God that were whispered through the Old Testament crescendo to a deafening roar. God has come for His people, and He will not be ignored.

Here is our Creator, walking before us with dirty feet.

Here is our Savior, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with sinners.

Here is the broken bread and the rooster's crow; the agony of grief and the heavy stone; the empty tomb and joy of Mary Magdalene.

Here is Zóé – life from death, a garden from a wilderness – the fulfilled promise of Lent.

Here is the victory of God, because Christ's resurrection is so much more than reanimation – it is the reversal of death itself.

Here is Jesus risen, just as He said. And the angel's Easter morning message rings truer than ever:

#### Do not be afraid.

## ACTIVITIES

## Activity: Prayer Chain

For this activity, you will need: A few pieces of 8.5x11 paper Scissors Glue or stapler

As a family cut out 40 strips of paper. List 40 prayer requests, praises and people and write one on each strip. Link them the strips together into a chain. Take one link of paper off each morning of Lent and pray for what's listed on the strip.

## Activity: Almsgiving Box

For this activity, lay out the following materials on a table: A small box (you can do one box for your whole family or one for each child) Scissors for cutting a slot on the top of the box Markers, stickers, glitter pens & glue

Here are a few great organizations to support:

Union Gospel Mission | www.ugm.org Provides emergency care and long-term recovery services to hurting and homeless people in the greater Seattle area.

Aurora Commons | www.auroracommons.org A space for unhoused folks in North Seattle to rest, prepare a meal and connect to resources.

World Relief Seattle | worldreliefseattle.org World Relief Seattle works to resettle, employ, and equip refugees for success in this country. This organization does great work in the Seattle area, focusing on Kent and Des Moines.

## ACTIVITIES

#### Activity: Fruit Salad For this activity, you will need:

2/3 cup orange juice
1/3 cup lemon juice
1/3 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups cubed fresh pineapple
2 cups strawberries, hulled and sliced
3 kiwi fruit, peeled and sliced
3 bananas, sliced
2 oranges, peeled and sectioned
1 cup seedless grapes
2 cups blueberries

Have kids help you prepare the fruit and sort them into different containers. Let older kids label each container after a fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

While they're labeling, bring orange juice, lemon juice, and brown sugar to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and stir in vanilla extract. Set aside to cool.

Begin to layer the fruit in a large bowl. While you do this, talk about how all the fruits work together, how God will grow them in us when we follow him. Mix the fruits together in a big bowl, talking about each one as you go.

Pour the cooled sauce over the fruit. Cover and refrigerate before serving (after kids taste test).

## ACTIVITIES

# Activity: Candle Decorating This activity requires close supervision!

For this activity, you will need: Butcher paper or newspaper One white candle per kid Old crayons Lighter or lit candle

Each child (closely supervised) will take a turn holding a crayon over the lit candle. Don't hold a crayon over the candle for more than two seconds.

Kids will then write on their candle with the crayon's melted wax. (Be sure to tell them that the melted end of the candle is hot.)

Show kids how to draw a cross on their candle, then let them write their names or initials on the candles to show them that God's light shines through them.

Be careful that crayons are not held over the flame for too long! This creates a bigger mess and the crayons are easier to write with when their ends are only slightly melted. A crayon will repeatedly need to be melted to complete each side of the candle.

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

THE WILDERNESS Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Mark 1:12-13

INVOCABIT (BAPTISM OF JESUS) Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23; John 1:29-33

REMINISCERE (NICODEMUS) John 3:1-12;

OCULI (LIGHT OF THE WORLD) John 8:12-30

LAETARE (LIVING WATER) John 7:37-39

JUDICA/PASSION (LAZARUS) John 11:1-44

PALM SUNDAY Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19

MAUNDY THURSDAY (LAST SUPPER) Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-39; John 13:1-17

GOOD FRIDAY (TRIAL & CRUCIFIXION) Matthew 26-27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18-19

HOLY SATURDAY (PHARISEES) Matthew 27:62-66

EASTER (RESURRECTION) Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20

## GOOD FRIDAY AND KIDS

The passages describing the suffering of Christ have always been difficult to communicate to children. Adulthood can desensitize us to the horrific imagery in the account of Christ's death.

The account of the crucifixion in this book has been made as accessible as possible without whitewashing the extremity of Christ's sacrifice. However, younger children or sensitive kids may still be unable to handle the story.

Here are some tips for helping your child understand Good Friday in an age-appropriate way:

#### HELP THEM UNDERSTAND SIN

Sin helps children know the significance of Good Friday and Easter. Explain that God made us to be friends with him forever, but sin keeps us from that friend-ship.

#### USE RELATABLE LANGUAGE

You can say something like: "God loves us and wants to live with him forever, but sin would keep us separated. He wanted to defeat sin so that we can be friends with him."

#### BE CAREFUL

Some parents, in an effort to help their children understand the importance of Good Friday and Easter, go into too much detail about the crucifixion. Please prayerfully consider the impact that this information will have on a child. Consider things like temperament, past experiences and developmental level. Don't keep the truth from children – rather, reveal it in a planned and purposeful way. The details of Good Friday can be revealed incrementally over time as kids age.