Again this year, through an intentional partnership between the College of Theology and Christian Ministry and the Office of University Ministries, we have been able to create and offer a Lenten Devotional guide to help our campus community prepare for Easter.

In the Christian tradition, Lent is the period of the liturgical year from Ash Wednesday to Easter. The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer—through prayer, repentance, almsgiving and self-denial—for the annual commemoration during Holy Week of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, which recalls the events linked to the Passion of Christ and culminates in Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This guide has instructions for daily devotions during this season. You are encouraged to read scripture, the brief devotional and pray each day as you prepare your heart for Easter.

We are truly grateful for all of the individuals who have helped to make this fourth annual Lent/Holy Week guide a reality for our campus community, as it was indeed a campus-wide collaboration that includes contributions from students, faculty and staff from across the campus, and even a few alumni. What a gift it is to be a part of this special community with you!

May each day of reflecting upon God’s Word, and the written words of these writers, faithfully lead us through the Lenten season and towards a deeper union with Christ and one another.

Grace and peace,

Guy M. Chmielecki
Dr. Guy Chmielecki, University Minister, Office of University Ministries

Darrell D. Gwaltney
Dr. Darrell Gwaltney, Dean, College of Theology and Christian Ministry
GUIDE TO DAILY PRAYER

Opening Prayer
Comfort, comfort your people, O God!
Speak peace to your people.
Comfort those who sit in darkness and mourn,
Forgive us our sins and end the conflict in our lives.

Confession of Sin
Reflect quietly before God, asking for forgiveness for all things done and left undone, that are unpleasing to God. Remember, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Scripture Lessons
Read the Psalms for the day.
Read the Old Testament passage for the day.
Read the Epistle passage for the day.
Read the Gospel passage for the day.

Prayers
The following is a suggested guide for prayer during Lent.
Pray for all Christians around the world and especially for those who endure persecution for their faith.
Pray for our nation and all those in authority.
Pray that Christ’s peace may cover the world. Pray for the end of conflict and war and the triumph of truth and justice.
Pray for all those who engage in the educational ministry of the Church and especially for Belmont University.
Pray for those who suffer and grieve.
Pray for closer union with Christ—both in His suffering and ultimate victory.

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Psalm 51
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Two things from today’s readings become clear. First, the Jews knew fully that God’s salvation would come in Zion—both the Psalm and Joel’s prophecy announce this. Second, the early Christians saw Jesus himself as the coming of God’s salvation, not only in Zion, but in every place and for every people. Both of these are bold claims—the first is a seemingly exclusive one, used perhaps to exclude all others from God’s favor. The second one supplants Zion with a new geography and peoples, used perhaps to supersede the work of God with the Jews. Historically, of course, both of these attitudes have been present in the lives of biblical folks. Christians have long used supersessionist thinking to ignore, dismiss, and at times persecute the Jews.

But two other things become clear from today’s readings that challenge these ideas. First, the “day of the Lord” requires a personal reckoning, a willingness to take inventory of the ways in which we have forsaken the justice and peace of God’s world in favor of our selves. This itself, as Paul well knew, meant that we must cast off the concern with our own salvation, and instead become ambassadors for the very one who came to reconcile all people to God. A personal reckoning paradoxically demands humble attention to the presence of all of God’s children around us. Thus, in Matthew, Jesus makes clear that we are to reckon with God quietly—not because of a simple piety, but because doing so is the proper way to understand God’s salvation: when we seek God’s forgiveness, we can only do so by seeking to forgive those we would rather exclude.

It is remarkable that at Belmont, Ash Wednesday is a celebration not just of earthliness and embodiedness, but of our unity as well. When Christians at Belmont gather around the table of God’s salvation, we must necessarily do so as broken and divided people. But when we gather around the imposition of ashes, we are reminded that our salvation depends not just on God but on each other as well. May our time this Lent reveal to us how we might become God’s ambassadors to one another and to all those around us.

MICAH WEEDMAN
Associate University Minister and Director of Outreach
Office of University Ministries
I love the Old Testament because I love the Israelites. We are cut from the same cloth. I get them in a kindred spirit sort of way. I wish I didn’t, honestly. There are other, more righteous people that I’d like to say that I “get,” but if I’m being honest, these are my people. Israelites stumbled their way through and I find myself stumbling right behind them.

For one thing, I suffer from spiritual amnesia, oftentimes forgetting almost instantly who God is and what he has done for me. For another, I complain and grumble my way through the desert. I tell God I was better off where I was before, even when he has deliberately delivered me from that place. Though I sometimes scoff at the Israelites’ reactions to God’s action in their lives, their story is mine.

Deuteronomy 7:6-11 must have been a good reminder for them. Lest they forget who is in charge, Moses reminds them once again of the saving grace of the Lord in their deliverance from slavery.

“It is because the Lord loves you… that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you…” It is because the Lord loves you. It seems elementary, but it is truth that begs to be repeated. It is because the Lord loves you, loves me, and loves all of us.

I am not unfamiliar with the Lord’s love—it has been my guiding light in the most confusing of seasons. But the truth is, I turn right around and work for it, showing him the good things I’ve done this week to prove to him that I am worthy to keep around, at least for the next week. But we see here, it is because of the Lord’s love for us that we have been saved. There is no need to work for it—it has been freely given from the heart of a patient Father.

It is not because of what you have done.

It is not because of what you have not done.

Actually, it is quite often in spite of those things. He has freed you from the grip of sin because he loves you. The desire to know you and love you was the only reason he needed to take the Cross.

KELSEY KING
Senior
Religion & the Arts

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Psalms 31, 95
Deuteronomy 7:12-16
Titus 2:1-15
John 1:35-42

“Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness.” Psalm 95:8 (NRSV)

These days, I begin my mornings by praying through the Office of Readings. The Office of Readings is one of what is called the Liturgy of Hours, the seven times of prayer set aside each day for Catholic priests, nuns, monks and religious observants throughout the world. As I have time, I enjoy participating with the broader church once each day, joining my voice to that of the broader church.

The Psalms play a particularly important role in the Liturgy of Hours. The Office of Readings begins each day with three readings from the Psalms. Usually, I find spending time in the Psalms to be rich and filling.

There is a particular Psalm, however, that unnerves me, and because it unnerves me, I seem to find it in the readings more often than those heart-warming sheep-by-the-still-waters type of Psalms. That unnerving Psalm is Psalm 95. “Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,” the translation I often read has it. This verse refers to the time during the Exodus when the Israelites are complaining, and Moses makes water come from a rock. The Psalm ends with the Lord’s anger kindled against the Israelites, swearing that this generation “shall not enter my rest.”

What about the Psalm unnerves me so? Is it the idea that we could harden our hearts so much that God would leave us in our wandering? Is it the idea that we could harden our hearts so much that we bar ourselves from God’s rest?

When I read the Psalms, I don’t often find a theology with neatly-drawn lines. I find a messy book, full of longing, full of questions, full of rage at times. I find a book with poems, with narrators that are petty like me, that are confused like me. I find a book that tries to give a language to our questions of God, as much as it does to our praise of God.

Wandering is hard-traveling, and we all travel hard roads in our lives. In this time of Lenten wandering, where are you tempted to hardening your heart? What are the ways that you resist this temptation? What are your provisions for the journey?

DONOVAN MCBEE
Assistant Professor of Religion and the Arts
College of Theology and Christian Ministry
In Chinese there is a proverb: "There’s no flaming mountain you cannot surmount." This proverb is derived from one of the four great classical novels entitled Journey to the West. The work is an allegorical rendition of the journey from China to India made by Xuan Zang, the famous monk from the Tang Dynasty. Mingled with Chinese fables, legends, popular beliefs and monster stories, the journey of the characters is a long and arduous one, full of trials and tribulation, dangers and adventures.

As Christians, our hope in life’s journey, unlike that recounted in Journey to the West, is based on the history of the cross of Jesus Christ and the mighty act of our God in raising Him from the dead. The gospel affirms that no matter what obstacles we face, we are in God’s hands. As King David cries out to the Lord, “You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance” (Psalm 32:7).

Having come from China to seek my Ph.D. and now as I teach at a wonderful Christian institution, I have faced numerous mountains in graduate study, pursuing a job, teaching my classes and in making decisions in life. Although my Chinese culture has infused into me the drive and confidence to overcome all the obstacles on my path, my Lenten practice as a Christian reminds me that I cannot remove the mountains in my journey if I do not rely on God’s mighty power. My life experience in the U.S. over these years has confirmed this truth! Time and again, when I was at a loss as to what to do, when I felt desperate at the intersection of a challenging choice, I presented my eager heart to God and sought His help. He listens to my prayers and my cries. HE guides; HE heals; HE cares; HE supports; HE provides! Just as the children of Israel remembered God’s deliverance of their nation from Egyptian bondage, our Lenten reflection is turned toward the recollection that we are God’s children and His love for us is so vast that He gave His only son for us. We have to remember that “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” (Titus 3:5)

QINGJUN (JOAN) LI
Assistant Professor of Asian Studies and Chinese Language
Foreign Language Department

The cosmic question of how God might make our broken worlds right—healing the whole of reality forever—isn’t a question the Bible answers definitively with one verse. It isn’t as if all injustice can be sufficiently addressed with one memorable motto or doctrine. It is instead a question all the different texts within the Bible mul over constantly and differently. Stop dwelling these horrible things to each other, the prophets say God says to all hearers over the centuries. But how will God actually put into effect the righteous thriving we’re called to seek in all we say and do? Ever wary of cliché and false consolation, we get to mull like the Bible mulls.

Jesus too was called to mull. And he did so by way of the songs, the prophets, and the covenants of his people he knew by heart. In today’s lectionary, we get to too. According to the rainbow sign, for instance, we’re barred from conceiving death by flooding as an expression of God’s righting of things (9:11). And alongside the well-known petitions for instruction, relief, and continued sustenance in our psalm, we’re perhaps surprised to see the expressed hope that the “wantonly treacherous” among us would develop a sense of shame (25:3). What an interesting thing to pray and long for.

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Having just mulled his way to baptism from his cousin John, Jesus’ first order of business was to be driven by the Spirit “into the wilderness” (1:12) where his mulling would take on a peculiar intensity. While we will eventually hear tell of the Satan (Hebrew for Accuser) placing before Jesus variously effective avenues for fixing the world for God (stones into bread, angelic spectacles, geopolitical dominance), Mark, our earliest gospel, reports a tempting void of detail. To me, this suggests that we might do well to view this meditative trial—we all have them—as somewhat akin to Luke Skywalker’s wrestling with fears in a cave in the Dagobah system or Korra going deep into her own best, clarifying dreams in the Avatar series.

We have to honestly confront our worst solutions before we can see the righteous ones. What are yours? Have you begun to mull?

DAVID DARK
Assistant Professor of Religion and the Arts
College of Theology and Christian Ministry
I repeatedly doubt whether God is sufficient for me. This doubt doesn’t usually express itself in thoughts or questions, but in my desires and my attitudes. When I feel alone I seek people to fill my ache. When I am failing I seek my own strength to fix my situation. When I am succeeding I beam at my own performance. I am so like this man in Psalm 52. I think a lot of us are.

Our trust is not always in riches, but often in our friends, our abilities and our personalities. We place trust in the things we find around us, and ultimately at some point, they fail to meet our expectations. I think I saw it on Pinterest somewhere that expectation is the root of all heartache, and I think this statement is very true. Humans—our friends, our parents, ourselves—whatever we expect of them, at some point they will let us down.

But we have access to a God who is able to do far more abundantly than anything we could ask or think! We cannot even imagine the mind-blowing things He can do! Look at the Deuteronomy passage. The Israelites had at this time been brought by God again to a place of safety, had set up their lives there and were in danger again of trusting in their own power and riches to fulfill them. But they served the same God that we do today. The same God who brought them out of slavery and led and fed them in the wilderness. The same God who can change the chemical makeup of a liquid without really doing anything.

Meditate on this God today. Consider his might and his beauty and his bigness. List as God did for the Israelites in Deuteronomy the works that He has accomplished in your life, big and small. You can start with Him coming as a child and enduring life as you, as a human who felt and knew what it was to be lonely, to fail, to weep. Start there, but bring it into your today. In our thankfulness for socks and life and Christmas lights and health and lasagna and knock-knock jokes, we can come to know the care with which the Lord has crafted each of our lives. And we can be sure that He is sufficient.

BECCA KENNEDY
Alumna
Missiology

Think back to the time when you were four. No matter what type of community you lived in, be it a city with bustling traffic or a small farming town with tractors and trucks, you had roads. And, when you were four, your parents made sure you held their hand when you crossed one of those roads. They paid close attention to you. Why? Love. They knew that in order to keep an adventurous four-year-old alive, they had to pay attention and fix their thoughts on your safety. They could not allow themselves to be distracted.

Now think with me a bit about the idea of distractions. You might say they’re a bit sneaky, and if we’re not careful, we get swept right up into them. You might even say our culture has chronic distraction disorder. And let’s be honest, we are often most distracted by helpful things—phones, iPads, Facebook, activities, etc. But at the same time, we know that when something is deeply important to us, like holding a child’s hand while crossing the street, we pay attention. And that’s exactly the truth that the Lenten Season rightly reminds us of. During Lent, we vow to sacrifice something we normally enjoy having or doing so that we can 1) refocus our attention on Jesus’ amazing work on the cross and 2) strive to identify with Him in His sacrifice. As you read these four passages today, you’ll quickly note that the Israelites’ attention was swiftly moved from God to idols. You’ll see that the temple officials lost their focus on the importance of God’s house and turned it into a place of selfish money-making. God was angry with them for not striving to pay attention.

So, what can we do to keep ourselves focused? First, daily admit your brokenness. Cling to your real identity. Hold on to your Christ-based courage and the hope of the gospel. And enjoy Jesus for who He is.

As you give up your “idols” for Lent, I ask you to think intentionally about how this helps you fix your thoughts on Jesus and His relationship with you. He doesn’t just want you to think about Him, He desires for you to be deeply, rawly convinced of your importance to Him, and out of that true love, share that core-fulfilling care and tenderness with people.

ALYSIA GREEN
University Ministries Assistant
Office of University Ministries
As we all head into the time of the semester where mid-terms and projects are staring us in the face, or for some of us slapping us upside our heads, it is easy to put our faith on the back burner. All of us can come up with a dozen excuses of why we need that extra 30 minutes of sleep or study time instead of waking up early and doing some reading or journaling. During this busy time I draw comfort and inspiration in Hebrews 3: 12-19 but more specifically 12-13 where we are called to…

“12 See to it brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. ”

During this time of the semester it is even more important to turn to God with open hearts and compassion and not “turn away” from him. It is very important to make sure we are all diligent in staying in his word and to also ask those around us to hold us accountable. Encourage those around you with a simple text, tweet or message and let them know they are not alone and to “Hold our conviction.” Will it really change your performance on that test or make that paper any better if you do not carve out 30 minutes during the day for a devotional, intentional prayer or just quiet meditation?

My belief is that once you dive into the word and clear your mind of all the stuff that is distracting you or causing your stress, you will find yourself even more focused on the task at hand with a rejuvenated spirit!

JAMIE ZELLER
Director of Fitness and Recreation
Division of Student Affairs

Lent is the time in which we meditate upon the final days of Jesus Christ on Earth, including his death, burial, and resurrection. It is essential, then, to ponder why this event had to occur in the first place.

The passage today from Deuteronomy 9 and 10 recalls the tail end of the story of the Ten Commandments. The Lord called Moses up to the top of a mountain and described how the people must be obedient to Him: “you shall have no other gods before me, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, etc.” While this was happening, however, the people below were already busy breaking the first rule by constructing a golden calf. Upon coming down and witnessing them worshipping that idol, Moses broke the stones on the ground. He prayed fervently for the forgiveness of the people; “Sovereign Lord, do not destroy your people… Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin.”

Now, the Creator of the Universe was certainly not ignorant to the disobedience of these people. After all, they were not ordinary; these were in fact God’s chosen people. The Lord did some awesome and mighty acts to free them from the slavery and harsh living conditions under the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh, yet now as they are being led to the Promised Land, they have already forgotten the faithfulness of God.

Ever since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, one thing has been certain: mankind is not perfect. We are absolutely incapable of perfect faithfulness to each other, let alone God. Moses’ people broke the Ten Commandments before they were even aware of them! Although our faithfulness wavers, however, the Lord’s does not. In the greatest exhibit of love the world has ever seen, He offered up His only son that we would be saved (John 3:16). In that one act, salvation came to us, a disobedient, self-seeking people. Jesus’ death remains the ultimate testimony of the abounding grace and mercy of God. It is upon the truth of the faithfulness of God that we put our hope and trust, knowing that He will not fail us!

MICHAEL KELLEY
Junior
Religion and the Arts
**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27**

- Psalms 40, 54
- Deuteronomy 10:12-22
- Hebrews 4:11-16
- John 3:22-36

The truth is, we’re all so very weak. We may act like we have it all together, but at the end of the day, nobody needs to remind us that we’re broken people. We know. There are some things in life that are givens: you know, things like vegetables are good for you and don’t talk in elevators. Well, another one of those givens is this: we’re all a bit messed up. Forlorn and frail, we desperately try to walk in obedience to the Lord, yet stumbling blocks abound. And frustratingly enough, the most abundant stumbling block of all is the self. Temptations entice from dawn until dusk, and more often than not, selfishness is the victor. Stumbling time and time again, we find ourselves convinced that God could never love anyone so wretched. Even the Lenten season—when viewed merely as a time to do more good deeds, to exercise self-discipline or to attempt to earn God’s acceptance through acts of penitence—can serve as a sobering reminder of our sinful disposition and weakness. Simple act of trying to give up something for Lent—whether it be chocolate, meat, smoking, Facebook or maybe even going to class create the possibility of failure. And let’s be honest, failure is one of the few areas in which we all excel. Failure often leads to shame and self-condemnation, and in that dark pit—that place where our inferiorities and weaknesses loom so large—it’s easy to believe that God has nothing but judgment for us. Nevertheless, as Christians, those very moments that remind us of our shortcomings must turn our focus once again upon God’s amazing grace, which we can claim confidently through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. For that reason, don’t simply let Lent be another painful reminder of your weakness as a human; let it be a time in which you reflect on the strength, grace and love that are yours in Christ.  

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16)

**RYAN PINO**  
Alum  
Asian Studies Major

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**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28**

- Psalm 55
- Deuteronomy 11:18-28
- Hebrews 5:1-10
- John 4:1-26

Many years ago I was flying Southwest. At the time, passengers had to line up to get a number which would determine the order of boarding. So when the flight attendant announced the giving out of numbers all the passengers dutifully lined up. I fell in line behind a young man dressed in what I would call “grunge” attire. His clothing was big and baggy and he had visible tattoos and dreadlocks. The entire time I was behind him I kept hoping he wouldn’t turn around and I would not have to talk to him.  

After receiving our boarding numbers, the only place to sit was right next to this young man. So being the polite Midwesterner that I am, I struck up a conversation with Mr. Grunge. I decided I’d rather have a few uncomfortable minutes of conversation with someone I didn’t know how to relate to than sit in silence staring at the other travelers. Besides, we’d be boarding soon and I could sit wherever I wanted on the plane.  

I started with the obligatory, “Where you headed?” I learned this young man was going to visit his grandmother in St. Louis. Exactly where I was going. I learned he was Jewish, and he studying to be a Rabbi. Imagine my surprise when he showed me the book he was reading. It was a Hebrew Bible! Well, I got to thinking, “Maybe he isn’t so bad after all.” We shared some more about our families, then Mr. Grunge took off his jacket to show me his newest tattoo... a Star of David in honor of his grandmother. He then showed me the tattoo he got when he became an Eagle Scout!  

Once we boarded the plane, Mr. Grunge and I sat next to each other continuing our conversation until we landed. We hugged and parted ways at the baggage claim. My sister came up just as Mr. Grunge was leaving. She immediately asked, “Who was that?!” I told her it was someone who challenged my idea of judging people by their looks.  

So often we judge people by what they wear and not by who they are. I learned a valuable lesson on that flight. I hope I can continue to view people the way Jesus does and not by what they are wearing.

**DONNA GWALTNEY**  
Senior HR Generalist  
Office of Human Resources
Most Christian holidays (holy days) are happy times. Advent is a time of waiting with happy expectation. Christmas is full of joy, and Easter celebrates the best of all days in the Christian calendar. Not so with Lent. Lent is a whole season of dwelling on Jesus’ suffering. We want to get to the happy part quickly, to skip the difficult, but that is not how we see Jesus in the Gospels.

As Jesus was going toward His resurrection, we see a lot of attention paid to the journey, which was a very hard one. We might want to hear a story like this: Jesus is going to suffer, but it will be quick and no big deal, and then... RESURRECTION! We want the suffering to hurt a little, like holding our breath while the doctor pulls out a splinter. Just a little pain and then the party can begin!

However, that is not what we see in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus taught the disciples that He must undergo great suffering. Great suffering! And that He was going to be rejected, which we now know meant physical and emotional suffering, and perhaps even what we might call spiritual suffering. And that He was going to die. Jesus mentions that He is going to rise again, but this meant so little to Peter that Peter tried to talk Him out of the whole thing!

What are we to do with this suffering Jesus? I would like to suggest that we learn from the medieval Christians. They knew that life included very difficult circumstances. Physical suffering, emotional difficulties, and even spiritual “dark nights of the soul” were part of their daily lives. And they knew that Jesus got it. He knew all about their suffering. They knew they were not alone, and they found His suffering to be a comfort.

What if Lent, or at least a small part of Lent, is a time of embracing the difficulties in our lives and allowing ourselves to experience the comfort of Jesus?

ANN COBLE
Lecturer
College of Theology and Christian Ministry

Our world tells us in a thousand unexamined ways that everything is more important and more powerful than Jesus. It has always been this way. When the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the small group of Christians living in Rome, it was easy to see who, and what, was powerful in this world: the Roman Empire and emperor. The emperor was celebrated as the “Son of God” on coins, he and his government brought “righteousness”/“justice” and “peace” into the world; and it was the duty of all people to spread this “gospel”/“good news” to all. Those very words, “gospel,” “righteousness,” “peace” and even “Son of God” were used of Rome and Caesar before Jesus came on the scene. It was treason to apply those terms to anyone else, as St. Paul does in Romans 1. He was openly defying the political, artistic, military, social and economic might of the empire, claiming it was not the last word.

Lent is a time for us to turn away from being transfixed by the power and importance of this-worldly claimants to our loyalty and attention, and to again “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” For “though we do not see Him, we love Him.” And even more amazing, “this is love, not that we loved God, but God loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” So we can say, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me, and the life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

In Paul’s day, the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome captured the loyalty of peoples across Europe, Africa and Asia Minor. Then and now, followers of Jesus were tempted to give their allegiance to the might of the Global Economy, the hegemony of the Only Superpower, and the Cultural Elites’ insistence on relativism in both personal morality and religious commitments.

But all that earthly power is as nothing compared to the “power of God,” which is seen most fully when the Powers That Be unleash their fury on Jesus, putting him on a cross. Lent is our opportunity to come again to the cross, “by which I have been crucified to the world, and the world to me.”

TODD LAKE
Vice President
Office of Spiritual Development
TUESDAY, MARCH 3
Psalm 61, 62
Jeremiah 2:1-13
Romans 1:16-25
John 4:43-54

There reigns a promise of hope, refuge and deliverance. It is the same promise given to the Israelites, to David, and to the royal official in John 4. And today still, this promise is offered to you.

From the Old Testament to the New, Scripture depicts a Heavenly Father who remains faithful to his covenant, despite the many errs and disbelief of his children (see Jeremiah 2 and Romans 1). When the official approaches Jesus in John 4 to ask for healing for his son, Jesus says, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe." Despite the promise of hope, refuge and deliverance, we fall prey to faithlessness, seeking miracles and instant fixes. When in the wilderness, it often becomes difficult to remain faithful and patient to the Lord. Instead, we seek idols; we grow weary of the journey and are quick to lose faith.

But what we see is that the official "took Jesus at his word and departed." He trusted in the promise, and as always, the Lord remained steadfast. The son was healed. It wasn't a grandiose display of power before hundreds of eyes, nor did the official know for certain that his son was alive as he journeyed home.

I don't know about you, but I so desperately want to have the faith of the official, to abide in the promises of our Savior, and to walk forth trusting in the words of our Father.

Psalm 61-62 reminds us that the Lord has been, and will be, both our refuge and source of strength. We need only to hold tight to that truth, even in the valleys and wilderness, knowing that the One before us will remain as faithful to us as He has to those in Scripture. Go on, friends; depart with the promise tucked deep within your soul, and journey ahead knowing that His promise is steadfast and true.

JOCELYN YOUNG
Senior
Corporate Communications

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4
Psalm 72
Jeremiah 3:6-18
Romans 1:28-2:11
John 5:1-18

The prayer of David in Psalm 72 seems to foreshadow the plight and promise for all mankind. Mankind, despite its sinful nature, is greatly loved by God. Jeremiah describes the faithlessness of Israel, a nation chosen by God. Her immorality mattered so little to her and extended so far that God was willing to extend her a certificate of divorce. Yet He waited for her return. Time and time again He waited for her to no longer follow the stubbornness of her evil heart, acknowledge her guilt and return. "Return, faithless people," declares the Lord, "for I am your husband. I will choose you…" Romans describes the plight of people so wayward that God had given them over to depravity of mind so that they do what ought not be done, every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. Although they know God's righteous decree that such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these things but approve of those who practice them. Mankind, because of his unrepentant heart, stores up wrath, trouble and distress against himself. Yet, God loves us so much that He not only waits for us to return to Him, He also pursues us. As with the man by the pool of Bethesda, Jesus recognizes our sinful condition. He knows that we have labored there in a weak and defenseless condition for a long time. With mercy and tenderness He asks the sin-sick soul "Do you want to get well?" Still, for us, He awaits our return. Out of the riches of His love with kindness, forbearance and patience—He waits. Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. "For He will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no help. He takes pity on the weak and needy and saves of us from death."

ANGIE BRYANT
Assistant Dean of Students
Division of Student Affairs
THURSDAY, MARCH 5

Psalm 71:5-6

For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of you.

In today’s gospel reading, Jesus tells his disciples where his power and authority come from. But Jesus’ power is not the kind that we are used to. It is not violent or proud. It does not impose or coerce. Jesus does not derive his power from subordinating others to himself, but from subordinating himself to his Father. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. (John 5:19)

The Father loves his Son and the Son loves his Father. The Father holds all life in his hands, but as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. (John 5:26) The Father knows true justice, yet has given his Son authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. (John 5:27) The power of God’s threefold inner life is the unique power of relational love—the sort of power accompanied by the words, I can do nothing on my own. (John 5:30)

We know that the season of Lent calls us to self-denial. Each year, we give up a personal luxury, hear about how we are dust, and maybe even receive a cross of ashes on our foreheads. But the reason we participate in these rituals during Lent is not to feel pious or to improve ourselves. Ultimately, these rituals challenge us to remember what true power is. It is not lofty or flashy. It is crucified, dead and buried. And we must be, too. But we will come out of the grave singing, with the psalmist and with Jesus himself, You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. (Psalm 71:20)

DREW MILLER
Junior
Religion and the Arts

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

Psalm 69:21

Christians and Jews throughout the centuries have turned to Psalm 69 for strength. Suffering and survival as well as pain and joy culminate in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Language reflecting both agony and praise reminds us of God’s intimate involvement with the oppressed. Perhaps it is the evocative language of poetry that triggers memories of Holy Weeks in my past. I recall one Good Friday in particular because there was a storm threatening on the horizon. One of the mothers came out on the porch and admonished us for playing while “at this very moment the Good Lord is dying for your sins.” An earsplitting crack of lightning and thunder affirmed her belief and we scurried home. Clambering into the house we speculated that God was angry. My mother suggested that God was grieving for his Son. Years later my niece became inconsolable during Palm Sunday. Crying, she kept repeating, “How could he keep going toward that place knowing he would die?” Six years later my own son, then five crawled into my lap to share some “sad and bad thoughts.” At daycare they had been talking about the life of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. My son wondered, “How could he leave the house every day to keep helping people when he knew it was so dangerous?” I stroked his hair and spoke quietly about the courage Dr. King had because of his deep convictions regarding doing the right thing that grew from his belief that God was always with him.

During the Lenten season I often reflect upon the courage of Jesus as the Christ during those dark and forsaken moments. I also try to remember the many women and men who find the strength to keep riding towards danger, to stand alone, to speak when nobody else will, and to remain silent when words are empty or harmful. We learn in Psalm 69:9 that enmity directed towards God may cause the suffering of those who act like God. We take courage from the promise of resurrection. More importantly we learn in Psalm 69:21 that we often curse our enemies but when Jesus was offered bitter vinegar at the cross to quench his horrible thirst he responds with compassion to those who were torturing him. The need to embody this lesson grows with each generation.

PEG LEONARD-MARTIN
Director of Counseling
Division of Student Affairs
SATURDAY, MARCH 7

We all want to be told that we are loved, but you rarely find someone who enjoys talking about God’s judgment. To many, the idea of God’s judgment paints a picture of an angry God, but if we pay close attention, it is in God’s judgment that we see one of the clearest pictures of God’s love.

Jeremiah 5:20-31 tells of one of the many times that God is judging the people of Israel, and it is here that we can see that even when God casts out judgment, it is out of complete and utter love.

In this passage, God speaks through Jeremiah, and addresses the judgment that He will cast upon Israel because of their evil ways. So what horrible thing have they done to deserve this judgment? The word of God says in Jeremiah 5:28: “They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.”

God is upset because the fatherless are not being cared for, the needy are not being defended and evil is running rampant throughout the world, causing more and more people to become fatherless and needy. The people of God were not living in a way that embodied His character. Therefore, God became angry to the point of judgment. Put simply, God becomes angry when His love is not made known to all people.

God has given us the opportunity to become His sons and daughters through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As people of God, we, just as the people of Israel were in Jeremiah, are to live in a way that embodies His character. We are to care for the fatherless and the needy. We are to love.

To this you may ask, what about those who aren’t fatherless and poor? God is our Father, and He is full of all riches, so it is natural to say that those that do not know Him are fatherless and needy. We as God’s people are called to love all people, especially those who do not know Him. God desires that we all experience His greatness, and when there are people that do not know Him, He becomes angry. Can’t you see? God’s judgment is not out of hate, it is out of love.

RYAN COMBS
Alum
Mass Communications

SUNDAY, MARCH 8

The text of the Ten Commandments, its transmission through the centuries, and the traditions that have accumulated around it, have become nearly inseparable. The numbering of the text as Exodus 20:1-17 indicates their internal irregularity. There is no inherent “ten-ness” about the commandments. The odd collection of legal sayings comes to us first as part of a conversation between God and the Israelites, one that frightens the Israelites so deeply that they want no more direct divine encounters. “You [Moses] speak with us and let us hear, but God shall not speak with us or we will die” (Exodus 20:19). Perhaps fear generated the idea in Deuteronomy to fix the laws on stone tablets. Numbering of the laws as ten is an idea of uncertain origin. They could just as easily be nine, eleven, or even twelve, so it is difficult not to assume that choosing ten was an attempt to connect these sayings to the human body.

The desire to number, count, and systematize is a part of human experience we should not reject or demonize, but make the object of careful contemplation. Counting puts distance between us and the thing enumerated, allowing both understanding and control. The long history of the Ten Commandments offers a model for the tension between a dangerous, liberating tradition and a sense of control that helps us live with it. Placing the Ten Commandments into the exodus story and the Israelites’ visit to Mount Sinai puts the laws back into a conversation again, one we can relive when we read the narrative. The context reminds us that the confinement of laws combines with a story of liberation. The Lenten season allows the life of the church to reflect the ebb and flow of these two ideas. We move from contemplating our limitations toward celebrating freedom. The plot in the gospel of John places Jesus’ temple-clearing at the beginning of his public life and shows Jesus returning to the temple on later occasions and interacting productively with those he encounters there. The clearing is neither condemnation nor end but an act of public contemplation in the life of an institution that reflects the inward movement of Lent, and makes space for future liberation.

MARK MCENTIRE
Professor of Biblical Studies
College of Theology and Christian Ministry
“God please help me! Restore me O God!” If you are like me, there have been many times in life that you have desperately called on our Heavenly Father for guidance, comfort and love. As I reflect on the events, which caused me to fall to my knees in plea for God’s help, I realize a common denominator in each scenario. I was trying to handle things on my own. It was “my” problem and so “I” was going to fix it. This was a terrible decision.

I am a type A person and therefore like to take care of things by myself. That way for a project, I know that it was finished, how it was completed and whether or not it actually fixed the problem. I guess you could say I have a hard time putting my whole trust in others. Last year I had a friendship that was nearly broken because of some poor decisions my friend had made. I tried to fix it without letting God take the reins and have full control over the situation. During this period of questions, doubts and fears, once I finally figured out that I was truly exhausted and broken down; God showed me that I was not alone in this life. He carries me through life daily and He wants to take care of YOU.

During this Lenten season we are in preparation for the day of Jesus’ resurrection. The day when all of our sins are washed away, all our troubles are set free and we have a God who has truly risen and defeated death. That is surely something to celebrate. Through my fix-it-all-on-my-own attitude moments, I finally came to realize that I cannot go through life without the help of God. God knows my future and I am grateful for that. Even when you feel that you have pushed God far away from your soul, He is probably closer to you than any time before. Once you have invited Him into your life, He is always there. I pray that this gives you as much comfort as it does me. God be with you through this Lenten season and remember to always thank Him for being by your side day by day.

CASEY ENRIGHT
Sophomore
Faith and Social Justice
Psalm 119:97-120
Jeremiah 8:18-9:6
Romans 5:1-11
John 8:12-20

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12 NKJV)

We live in a world plagued by the darkness of evil. You don’t have to look very far to see evil in the world, just turn on the evening news. However, the good news is, we have a Savior who has brought light into this world. We can rest in the promise that the darkness of this world can never extinguish the Light. When we choose to follow Jesus, He will light the way for us. Does this mean there won’t be any more darkness in our lives? No, that’s not the case because we live in a broken, fallen world. Still, everything looks different in the light of Christ. We can look at a desperate or difficult situation and have peace because we have the Light. We can go through all kinds of trials and tribulations and still choose joy knowing that the Light is with us. I think so many times we as believers are still stumbling around in the darkness, just trying to find our way, when all we need to do is allow the Light to lead us.

“For I know where I came from and where I am going…” (John 8:14 NKJV)

Jesus knows where He came from and where He is going—to the Father. If we choose daily to trust and follow Him, He will lead us along the path to the Father. If we are led by Jesus, we will become more like Him. Throughout this season of Lent, may we become more aware of if we are truly allowing Jesus to lead us in the light of life that only He can truly bring. May we always point others to Christ, the Light of the world. May we become vessels of His grace and love. And may we “…rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:2 NKJV)

LIBBY LIGON
Sophomore
Chemistry

Psals 42, 43
Jeremiah 10:11-24
Romans 5:12-21
John 8:21-32

We read today of Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus. In the secret of the night, Nicodemus privately acknowledges what he cannot confess by the light of day: you come from God. Jesus pushes back against him, questioning whether he has truly seen the new life revealed in his miraculous signs. “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born again/from above.” It isn’t enough for him to see the life of God revealed in others and in the world around him. He himself must be transformed to the point of new birth, birth that comes from God above.

We too must experience a new birth at the hand of God, a birth that expands the horizons of our original birth. This second birth does not devalue the original gift of our life in the flesh, for we must be born of the waters of our mother’s womb and of the Spirit. In other words, we are born to experience the fullness of human life, so that we may be born of the Spirit and in Him experience the fullness of God’s divine life. Though our spiritual life comes from above, it is born in the midst of our life here below. The Life of God has come to dwell in the flesh, in our flesh as in the flesh of Jesus. During Lent, I invite you to experience Jesus pushing back against you. For the moment, Jesus is not concerned with the outward expression of your faith. There will be other times this Lent for you to reflect on the potential hypocrisy of the faith you live before others in the world. Today, Jesus wants to ask whether you are experiencing in your own life that new beginning, the new life that only God can give. If you like Nicodemus find yourself doubting whether God can bring new life into the old and worn foundations of your life; come to Jesus. If you bear the sorrow of failures and traumas that seemingly cannot be undone, for how can one enter life a second time, then come to Jesus and hear him saying to you, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He is the new birth, that you may be born in God this day into a new horizon of life and possibility.

MANUEL CRUZ
Assistant Professor of Theology
College of Theology and Christian Ministry
For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. –Romans 6:5-8

Our freedom is rooted in the death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. How beautiful and amazing is this moment in history when Jesus carried the cross and suffered for our sins. Today, we are united in love and faith to proclaim that we are free.

The world is broken; it is dark and hurting. But the life Jesus has given us promises a life of light, hope, justice and love. Because of this act of love from his sacrifice, we are invited to do away with our all—not only our sinfulness, but our complete desires, thoughts and lifestyles.

His resurrection brings forth the promises and freedom to join His works. It is a daily affirmation and proclamation of His power. Through the Holy Spirit in us, we shine His hope, justice and love to the people in our lives. We crave to reach out to the people beyond our power knowing that His death and resurrection can bring healing to the heart, mind and body.

My prayer for this season of celebration of life is for the Spirit to move each of us, not just this season, but a movement in our lives. I pray we recognize the gift of freedom and His power to bring forth life. May we join His work of justice in this world now; as we live with Him.

SHANTY LUNA
Sophomore
Christian Leadership and Social Work

In our lives, it becomes very easy to forget about God in all the noise we are surrounded by. We have a thousand and one voices all clamoring for our attention, and promising the things that we really, truly want. We hope that if we accomplish enough, it will make us worth something. We hope if we have enough money, we will be safe. We hope that if we have enough relationships, that we will be loved. All of these offer that which God offers, but so many times we find ourselves slipping away to these things which we think we can control.

John Calvin said it well when he said, “the human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge of idols.”

The problem with these “idols,” is that though they promise us all the fulfillment in the world, the truth is that they can’t ever give it to us. They lead us on, and just when we think we’re almost there, the destination moves a little farther. And so we pour ourselves more and more into them, hoping that we will eventually reach what we are looking for.

This must all seem a bit strange to God. He has always been faithful, hasn’t he? He is true, good, and loving, and has proven himself time and time again. But even in my own walk, I find it hard to give him 15 minutes in my day, while I pour hours into things that I’m really placing my trust in. In today’s gospel passage, the Jews faced a similar situation. Before them stood Christ, who had spent his time teaching, healing, feeding the masses, walking on water, and performing miracles. He had shown with his actions who he was, yet they could not fathom that Jesus could be bigger than Abraham.

In this time of Lent, we as believers take time to stop and listen to what God would say to us. And through all the passages given today, I kept hearing God say “I am your God, and I am enough.” Our God has assured us of his love for us and his goodness, and he is reaching out, asking for our trust. He is our God, and he will never leave us, nor forsake us.

KYLE MINARDI
Sophomore
Church Leadership
As I was reflecting on the Scripture passages for today, I was struck by the recurring theme: God has given us gifts of healing and mercy and life, and we are in turn called to respond with grace and offer similar gifts to the world around us. The Gospel reading for today is familiar to many of us, as it includes the famous John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

The gift of abundant life is a recurring theme throughout the Gospel of John. Just a few examples: free-flowing, high-quality, celebratory wine at the wedding in Cana (ch. 2); hunger-satisfying bread of life for the crowds around the Sea of Galilee (ch. 6); living water for first one woman and then (through her word) an entire village of socially marginalized Samaritans (ch. 4); and the gift of actual, physical life for Lazarus (ch. 11). Bread, wine, water, breath itself: the staples of life in the first-century Mediterranean world.

That’s one place I think we sometimes miss the point of John 3:16, no matter how often we recite it from memory. Eternal life does include the promise of life after death, but it also speaks to the gift of abundant, joyful life that God gives us right now. It starts in this world, as a gift to us and a gift we are then called to offer the world.

Do we accept the life and joy God offers us as a gift that is to be shared with others? Do we offer to all, without judgment? The Ephesians passage for today emphasizes that we are saved through the gift of God’s grace, not by anything that we personally do (2:8-9). But, it also states that we, as the body of Christ, “are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (2:10). Our calling as a community of faith is to live as Jesus lived, accepting gifts of abundance only with the appropriate grateful response: passing that life and love and justice and grace on to others without regard for any earthly, ecclesiastical or social divisions.

AMANDA C. MILLER
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
College of Theology and Christian Ministry

As I read the texts for today, I am struck with what we do with the choices we believe we need/ have to make with what lies in front of us. In the Gospel passage we read of the difference between Jesus’ and his disciples vantage points regarding these hungry followers sitting in front of them on the grassy hillside.

I’m grateful for Lynne Twist’s clarifying work in her book, _The Soul of Money_ in which she identifies what I see in Jesus’ and the disciple’s perspectives so clearly present in the Gospel story. There is in the disciple’s response to Jesus question (a test we’re told) a response that Twist names as coming from a place of scarcity. The more I sit with the Gospel passage and this scarcity idea side-by-side I recognize that the questions or statements born from a place of scarcity are questions born out of fear. The disciples fear or disbelief response to the need is, “It would take more than half a year’s wages…” and “…but how far will they (5 loaves & 2 fish) go among so many?” On the other hand, the kind, compassionate, patient teacher Jesus, responds, from what Twist names as, a place of sufficiency; there is enough, “for (Jesus) already had in mind what he was going to do.”

It seems to me that the season of Lent can be a gift of focused time for us to recognize our propensity for scarcity; a perpetual leaning toward the fear that there isn’t enough time, or money, or __________ (you fill in the blank). The scarcity may also show itself such that I don’t think that I’m enough, that I don’t have what it takes (as though it were all up to me). Lent, this symbolic desert testing time ushers us into a season of examination of where we are on the scarcity-sufficiency continuum. Can we allow ourselves to consider curiosity rather than fear that what God already has in mind to do will be enough, and, as the Gospel story reminds us, there will likely be plenty left over. Jesus, in recognition that what he has to offer is sufficient—is enough—gives thanks and hands out lunch. I love this simple truth!

May it be so for you and for me.

DANE ANTHONY
Lecturer
College of Theology and Christian Ministry
TUESDAY, MARCH 17

Psalms 97, 99, 100
Jeremiah 17:19-27
Romans 7:13-25
John 6:16-27

During this Lenten season, we’re reminded of the sacrifice that Christ made for us on the cross; but in our day to day lives, we sometimes forget this simple thing: God wins.

Through His death and resurrection, God reigns. He has defeated everything—every trial in our path, every thought of evil, and doubts in the presence of the Lord. In the presence of the Lord, even when His name is spoken, every worry, fear and doubt circulating in your mind vanish. Why? Because God wins.

He overcame this long ago. The very moment that He gave up His life and died on the cross, He already knew what trials you would be encountering on this very day. He knew what obstacles you would have to conquer up until this point. And He knows the struggle going on inside of your heart right now. But guess what? He has already overcome it! No matter how big or how small the trial you are facing right now is, God wins. He always has won and always will!

So throughout this season, be reminded that God wins. God has conquered whatever you’re going through and He remains victorious over all things. Praise Him and continue to thank Him for all He has done!

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.” (Psalm 100)

EMILIE HUBER
Junior
Nursing

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Psalms 101, 109
Jeremiah 18:1-11
Romans 8:1-11
John 6:27-40

Lent is a time Christians focus on repentance and our need for God’s amazing grace in our lives.

I have a special memory from last year on the first day of the Lenten season, Ash Wednesday. I had the privilege to accompany a group of Belmont students on an immersion trip to New York City over spring break. We focused on homelessness in the big city and served in soup kitchens, day care centers, clothes closets, and food distribution centers. We stayed at a church in Hell’s Kitchen and their pastoral staff worked with us all week. The pastors invited us to attend their Ash Wednesday service. The students were reluctant at first because some were not familiar with Ash Wednesday but we chose to participate anyway. Soon the reluctance turned to humbleness. Most of us participated in the service and continued our evening with a smear of ash on our foreheads. As we left the service we saw many New Yorkers on the subway with the same smear of ash on their foreheads. This symbol connected us with total strangers who shared our belief in Jesus Christ.

The world looks for satisfaction in things that will not last. We look for recognition in our jobs, approval from our family and friends, and we let the opinions of the world define us. We hunger for happiness and love to fill a void in our lives. The apostle John tells us that Jesus is the bread of life! If we believe in Jesus, we will find that satisfaction and approval we have been seeking in the world yet unable to find.

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again.” John 6:35

I invite you to reflect on those who are hungry in the world. They may be homeless and need the blessing of a meal. They may be hungry for the love of a savior, but instead look to the world to satisfy their hunger. As Christ followers, we are commissioned to go into the world and tell others about Jesus who is the bread of life! May this season of Lent be a time of reflection of what needs to change in our own lives and also that of the world.

NANCI ALSUP
Office Manager
Teaching Center
I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)

With Good Friday just around the corner, the theme of suffering is something that is often on our hearts. I often try to picture what it must have been like for Jesus to endure all of the pain and suffering that He did. What courage it must have taken for Him to accept a punishment He did not deserve. For Him to accept beating after beating. For Him to accept the cross.

Many times, when we deal with our own sufferings, courage is not our initial response. How easy is it for us to immediately question the Lord? For us to ask “why me?” For us to grow angry. Does not the Lord understand our sufferings better than anyone? Did our Lord not endure the ultimate suffering, knowing that there was a much greater good that would soon be revealed?

The question of why we must suffer is one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith. The Lord did not promise that this life would be without trials and tribulations. He did, however, give us the promise of the life to come. A life that would contain a joy and a peace that we cannot even begin to imagine.

When we remember the passion, let us keep in mind that the greatest suffering in all of human history, the suffering of Jesus Christ, also led to the greatest glory, the redemption of all sinners. Similarly, our own personal sufferings in this life, whatever they may be, are nothing compared to the glory that awaits us in Heaven.

And no matter what it is we’re going through, let us be reminded that God is beside us, going through it too. He will never leave us alone. When He came into this world, He also came into our suffering. And when His glory was revealed, so was our salvation. This Lenten season, let the Lord’s resurrection remind us of our own to come. When we will be joined with our maker in Heaven and live in a place where all pain and suffering is replaced with joy and love.

CHRISTINA-MARIE APIKELIS
Sophomore
Music Therapy

There are times when conversations, headlines, events of a day, or a timely quote cause one to pause and reflect. Recently a quote on a marquee caused such pause. The question, “What if you awake tomorrow and all you have is what you thanked God for today? I pondered the question for some time reflecting on the previous twenty four hours. I took the question to heart searching my memory to tally times where I had expressed gratitude. In the end, the number could be counted on one hand.

I became stuck on the quote and began to explore the question, “why?” Why are we so quick to lean on the grace of God but so unlikely to express gratitude? Is life too busy? Are we so consumed with the urgency of the moment that there’s no time to give thanks? Why are we so preoccupied?

Initially giving thanks may seem an uncommon step in preparation for Easter. Indeed there is an irony in expressing gratitude. The practice brings a greater awareness of providence and the many gifts of grace granted each day. When one begins to “give thanks” the focus moves from one’s own life to a focus on God and others.

Take a moment and reflect on Psalm 107, verses 1-32. The words speak of those who are hungry and thirsty; those who wander in the desert; those who are in darkness; and those who play the fool. As you read the text, the pattern becomes clear for in each challenge there comes a time of turning to God longing for deliverance. And just like God, He brings them out of their distress. That each occasion is accompanied with the clarion call of the Psalmist to “give thanks” is worth noting. Five times the words, “give thanks” frame the psalm.

As we move through the Lenten Season take time to reflect on your life and the call of the Psalmist to “give thanks.” May I suggest a gratitude list where you jot down all you are thankful for each day. Once you do, pause to reflect on the many gifts in your life and “give thanks” to God.

Then maybe compassion begins to color these days before Easter. Be gracious and “give thanks” for we have much in which to be grateful.

SCOTT ALLEN
Lecturer
College of Theology and Christian Ministry
As I write this, it’s Christmastime and I’m listening to Christmas music. And yet, I am thinking about the Lenten season. There is something that stands out to me about both of them: anticipation.

During Christmastime, we anticipate the coming of the Newborn King. During Lent, we anticipate His finished work on the cross. People alive during both of these times would have been anticipating these events for a very, very long time based on the prophecies that had been written about them long before. I’m sure they grew tired and impatient at times, and struggled to continue to believe Jesus was coming. However, the Lord sustained them and gave them the faith to continue to hope and to wait, and to recognize Him when He came.

If you’ve ever been in a season of anticipation or waiting, it can often feel tiring to continue to hope. It can grow discouraging—if you’re relying on your flesh or something else to sustain you. I know if I am waiting on anything, I’m prone to try and distract myself with something instead of turning to the Lord to continue to fill me with hope by His Holy Spirit. Only He can sustain us in times of anticipation and waiting. Left to ourselves, we will worry, become afraid and try to figure out the possible outcomes and scenarios our seasons of waiting and anticipation will produce. In Him, we are filled with hope and excitement for the future, as He continues to remind us that He only has good things awaiting us.

I think this is part of why it can be so spiritually beneficial to fast or give something up during Lent and at other times in the year, among other reasons—we find more in His presence than in anything else we thought had been sustaining us. Times of uncertainty cease to worry us, because we experience every treasure in Him, not in other things we had been holding on to. As a result, we can learn to see the future and all of its mystery as a grand adventure with Him, full of beautiful surprises, instead of some daunting puzzle. We know we have His presence—and we have experienced Him to be more than enough when other things are taken away. Seasons of anticipation become full of excitement and hope—not worry and fear.

RACHEL HARMON
Alumna
Entrepreneurship

As a college student, I found that my culture demanded that I find my worth in my successes and my pedigree. I had to be proud of where I came. I had to work hard in school, in extra-curricular activities and at my job to prove my worth and myself. Only through this hard work could I move up in the world and bring even more worth to myself. If I was satisfied, however, with where I was, my culture deemed me lazy, a failure.

Paul, in Philippians 3:4b-14, gives us a great reminder about how we ought to live our lives. He implores us to count all that we may boast in as loss because, when compared with Christ Jesus, it is nothing. Paul is offering us a counter-cultural message that can bring us relief and true worth.

This is hard for us to do on a daily basis, being so consumed with our own lives, and our culture tells us to boast in our own achievements, in our families, and in our wider communities, just as Paul’s culture told him to boast in his upbringing and way of life.

The season of Lent is a time for us to take Paul’s admonition to heart every day. We can practice, on a small level, self-denial. The season of Lent is itself a reminder of what we ought to do every day of our lives. Paul says, “For [Christ’s] sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Philippians 3:8b-9b).

As you prepare your heart for Holy Week, remember that the sorrow and pain of Good Friday leads to the joy and restoration of Easter Sunday. In order to participate in the power of Christ’s resurrection, we must also “share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10b). We cannot be Easter Sunday Christians only; we must also be Good Friday Christians. Faith in Christ alone is what brings us righteousness. To join with Christ in that righteousness, we have to deny ourselves and suffer the loss of all those things that once brought us such pride. Those things may not be as impressive or powerful as Paul’s résumé, but to each of our own hearts, they can be just as detrimental.

KELSEY SPINNATO
Alumna
Biblical Languages and English Writing
MONDAY, MARCH 23

Psalm 31
Jeremiah 24:1-10
Romans 9:19-33
John 9:1-17

The season of Lent is a season of great patience. We begin the journey on Ash Wednesday, entering a time of preparation and reflection that will last through Holy Week. We must be patient on this journey. We must silence our alleluias and cover our crosses while we patiently walk in the sorrow that leads to the cross. We are comforted, however, by the knowledge that Christ will rise on Easter morning. I find it easier to be patient through the preparation of Lent because I know that joy awaits me in the morning.

It is harder to be patient through pain and sorrow when we do not know how or when it will end. In some ways, the patience of Lent is easier because we know the end of the story. In moments of great sorrow, when every possible conclusion seems unimaginable, how then are we to have patience?

Paul’s letter to the Romans describes Christ as a stumbling stone, a stone that will be placed in our path and cause to slow down. I love this image of Christ, that Christ comes into our lives and begs for us to be patient in his presence.

I’m struck by the silence of the blind man in John’s Gospel. When Christ comes upon the blind man, it is his disciples who speak, not the man himself. Christ heals the man by making mud with his own saliva and after he is able to see, the man first speaks, affirming that he indeed was the man that used to sit and beg. The blind man was silent before the healing and it was Jesus who initiated the healing of the man.

This is how Christ works in our lives, too. Christ comes into our lives, and we stumble on the great, healing work that he will initiate in our lives. The great glory of Christ’s resurrection and mercy is that like the blind man, we do not need to ask for healing, Christ will initiate healing for those who choose to believe.

As we eventually move past Lent and into other seasons of difficulty and sorrow, we may find great hope that Christ’s resurrection is a continuing presence in our lives—and ultimately we do know the end of the story.

MEGHAN GWALTNEY
Alumna
Religion and the Arts & German

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

Psalms 121, 122, 123
Jeremiah 25:8-17
Romans 10:1-13
John 9:18-41

We live in a world dominated by sight. We’re drawn to flashy advertisements, take pictures on vacation to convince our friends we’re happy, and spend hundreds on products and clothes that help those around us see us as who we want to be. Our eyes are drawn to many places—the latest news story, the new car we can’t afford, the neighbor who seems to have it all together. We’re looking everywhere—everywhere but up.

The Psalmist in Psalm 121 writes: “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.” So often we are caught up in the hustle and bustle of creation that we lose sight of our Creator. It’s in times of trial when we decide to shift our perspective—to look upward instead of around us for help. The Psalmist then says in Psalm 123 that “as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord, until he has mercy upon us.” The Psalmist was convinced that if he kept His eyes focused on the Lord and didn’t shift his gaze that he would receive mercy.

When I was younger, I used to do gymnastics. One of my biggest fears was walking across the balance beam. I was terrified of falling, and after the first few unsuccessful attempts I had resolved that I would never make it across. After another fall, my instructor knelt down and said to me: “The next time you walk across, keep your eyes focused on me. Don’t look down, don’t look around you. Look straight at me.” As I tried the beam again, I focused on her face, awaiting me at the end of the long and narrow stretch. My feet wavered and I felt like I was going to fall, but with a single focal point, I was able to find my center, and walk all the way to the end.

Our God is waiting for us at the end of our balance beams. Although there will be things that demand we shift our gaze, keeping our eyes focused on Him will lead to a kind of peace only our God can provide. It’s a life-changing shift in perspective.

JEN MORELAN
Junior
Social Entrepreneurship
As busy individuals, we all can appreciate the value of planning. We make plans every day, whether it’s what we’re going to wear, what we’ll eat for lunch, or how we’ll get from point A to point B. In fact, we’re so accustomed to making plans that we often don’t know how to respond or react when things don’t turn out the way we planned.

When Mary was approached by the angel Gabriel and told that she had been chosen to be the mother of Christ, it’s hard to comprehend how she must have felt. Likely, Mary had her own plan for the course of her life, but God had a greater plan. His plan wasn’t what we might see as convenient, comfortable, nor comprehensible. His plan wasn’t on human terms nor timing. On the contrary, His plan was perfect.

“And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be according to your word’” (Luke 1:38, ESV).

The Lord had been promised. And now, the Lord was proclaimed to Mary. As shocking as it must have been for Mary, she chose to trust the Lord’s plan. And God worked in and through Mary to fulfill His great promise.

Consider your own life. As Christ has been proclaimed as the one who “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:12), have you embraced Him as your Savior? As you’ve witnessed God’s hand working in the midst of your own life, have you—like Mary—given Him your complete trust in His greater plan for your life? This Lenten season, may you embrace the Annunciation of the Lord. Even more, may you trust His perfect plan.

ADAM YORK
Director of Young Alumni Programming
Office of Alumni Relations

My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.

Psalm 131: 1-3

This Lenten season happens to fall just in time to realize that the end of the semester has already come into sight. The anticipation of graduation, summer jobs, internships or trips abroad has been in the back of your mind. Nonetheless, the rigor of classes and multiple activities pile on and create a feeling of anxiousness and restlessness.

When these feelings come around again, as they continually do, we quickly lose our eagerness to turn to God for guidance. We try to map our way out of the problems and anxiety. Psalm 131 is a great reminder that humility and submission to the Lord results in the most humble contentment.

In this season, it is necessary to take time to humble our hearts before God. Not only do we need to acknowledge him, but to accept the truth he is the one guiding us along our paths. I encourage you to take time to rest your heart in the knowledge that he is a trustworthy Father. Don’t concern yourself with great matters, rather quiet yourself before God: may he fill you with contentment and trust.

AMY SCHUH
Sophomore
Multimedia Production
As I reflect on today’s readings, I am transported back in time to a moment where I felt betrayed and broken. I remember the room, the faces and the tears. For years, I let that moment define me. But now, I wish I could remind my past self that this suffering was one scene in a much more epic story God had written for my life.

During Lent, it never fails that I am moved to tears by the scene in which our Savior, betrayed and broken, stares down from the cross into that sea of humanity He joined to save, while they mock, reject, and betray Him. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Ps 22)

What pain you must have felt in that moment, Jesus, when you looked upon the faces of the people You so loved! How could You bear it? Could they not see that this was the reveal? This was that key scene in God’s epic narrative of His deliverance to a people yet unborn. (Ps 22)

Even today, two thousand years after fulfilling Your promise, You still suffer far more than anyone. We mock, reject and betray You. And over and over, You forgive us. How can You bear it? And how can we consistently miss the point of suffering?

The answer must be that we simply can’t see. We are those who walk at night (Jn 11:10), so we stumble. Then we curse You for not catching us. But if we’d only reach out, we might feel You holding firm. If we’d stop and look behind us, we might see how far You’ve brought us. And as the truth of Your Presence awakens us, our path is illuminated, and we’d finally see the eternal reward: a future with hope (Jer 29:11).

This Lent, let us rely on the Lord’s unfaltering loyalty through both joy and pain. For me, each year the details of that day continue to fade as I step away and stare in awe at the complexity of God’s larger design. I see the beauty in my own brokenness and the peace that comes with forgiveness.

And Lord, perhaps that’s how we humans can bear our own suffering now, knowing that we always have You. And maybe that’s how You bore the pain of suffering then, knowing that You’d have us.

JESSICA MUELLER
Assistant Professor
Theater and Dance Department

We could say that Jesus came and died for our sins, but if we leave it at that, we miss the relationship that Jesus established through His death and resurrection.

In Jeremiah 37, we see that God’s plan to make a new covenant with us through Jesus Christ was personal. The emphasis of the new covenant was for us to know God in a deep and lasting way. God said that this new covenant would apply to everyone, because each and every one of us is important to God. Our God is not a God that is distant from His creation, but He wrote His law on our hearts, calling us His own people. You can’t get more personal than that.

In Psalm 144, we see that God cares for us because He is our fortress, our stronghold, and our shield. When Jesus went to the cross, He protected us from the punishment that we deserved. No matter how unworthy we were, He cared enough to take our sins as His own. I know that the only people that would give their life for mine are those who deeply love me, so this love that Jesus has for His people is immeasurable.

In John 11, we are told about how Jesus cared for His friends. Not only was Jesus there for Mary and Martha in their time of grief, He wept with them. From this story, we know that we can share our most painful and most joyful moments with our Savior, who genuinely knows us and loves us. One thing I know for sure is that human beings thrive on relationships with one another, so it makes sense that Jesus would meet that need in our lives.

In this time leading up to Easter, reflect on your relationship with God. Know that God has called you His own and “will remember (your) sins no more.” Jesus can take a role as friend in your life, and He will be a friend who will always protect you and never forsake you.

SYDNEY GANGLUFF
Junior
Religious Studies
Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD, the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD (Psalm 118:19-26).

The psalmist prays, “I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation” (v 21). Whatever the request was, God answered it by becoming the psalmist’s salvation. The request in question can actually be found two verses earlier: “Open to me the gates of righteousness.” The gates referred to are most likely the gates of the temple—the passageway into the presence of the Most Holy God. The psalmist is asking to be in the presence of God, and God answered the prayer by becoming his (or her) salvation.

We too can ask God to be in His presence, and we will also find that He has already answered us. Hebrews 9:11-15 says that Christ has entered the Most Holy Place by his own blood, securing our eternal redemption. He became our mediator to God’s presence in a new covenant secured by his death. Now we can enter through the gates of righteousness and give thanks to the LORD because Jesus has become our salvation. Jesus is the passageway into the presence of the Most Holy God. He is the Gate of Righteousness. “This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.”

This Palm Sunday, let us be thankful that Jesus passed through the gates of Jerusalem on his way to die and bear the punishment for our sins. Let us be thankful that God has shown us that the way to Him is through the Gate of Righteousness (John 14:6). And let us look forward to the day when we can “bless Him from the house of the LORD” and sing, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

ROBERT O’BRIEN
Alum
Religion and the Arts

MONDAY of HOLY WEEK, MARCH 30

Psalm 36:5-11
Isaiah 42:1-9
Hebrews 9:11-15
John 12:11

If I am not careful, and mindful, my work day starts something like this:

My cell phone awakens me to 5 a.m. I do a quick scan for phone calls and messages I might have missed while I was sleeping. I rush a cold shower to heighten my alertness to the world. I dash to my car for my 25 minute commute, stopping briefly for my two McDonald’s breakfast burritos and large ice tea. Closer to work, while stopped in traffic, I perform a ritualistic fast spin through the news stations on the radio to be informed about what others tell me I should be informed about. Once at my office I check emails and decide what I can answer, control, or change. I begin to put order and structure to make my reality determining how I want to be engaged—all of it shaped by others.

But then there are the days that I am mindful of the scriptures found in today’s Lenten guide. I am reminded by Psalm 36 that I, though completely a wretch, am loved by God whose love is so unfathomable that all of the controls I try to place in my life to create my reality are fruitless. Isaiah reminds me who Christ is and it brings me to the reality that it was through the covenant of Christ, not the plans of man, that divine justice was given. Christ came as the covenant to bring salvation and establish proper order, as Hebrews reminds us. Christ came, died, and rose again to secure an eternal redemption, once and for all. It is through that I am informed, I am engaged, and I have a reality of identity.

In a world where we spin reality and truth we must be intentional in our unhooking from the busyness that assaults us as we try to be informed, engaged and real. As Kevin DeYoung reminds us in Crazy Busy “the biggest deception of our digital age may be the lie that says we can be omni-competent, omni-informed, and omni-present.”

We can unhook. We can be Mary-present with others. We can know that our reality is the eternal redemption that has been secured and any of our human attempts to make it more is unbelief. And we can simply stand before our God whose love provides both comfort and refuge sometimes from ourselves.

MARK HOGAN
Chair
Education Department
TUESDAY of HOLY WEEK, MARCH 31

Psalm 71:1-14
Isaiah 49:1-7
1 Corinthians 1:18-31
John 12:20-36

General George S. Patton said, “Americans love a winner.” We admire the strongest, most powerful, fastest, smartest and most influential. We emphasize being first and make no apologies for being the best. Fame, fortune and success drive us in our studies and later in the corporate world, and we emulate starlets, business moguls and world leaders who have made it.

Unfortunately we often buy into our society’s norms without questioning their validity. Will the endless pursuit to be “Number 1” be worthwhile in the long run? Will it bring us eternal satisfaction or mere temporal bliss? Will those in pursuit of the brass ring be on God’s “Who’s Who” list? The scripture for today from 1 Corinthians suggests that our contemporary priorities are mistaken and those in pursuit of them will not be held in high esteem. In fact, verses 27 and 28 state:

God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. (NLT)

The bible turns today’s contemporary standard upside down. It is not the haughty but the humble, not the pretentious but the unassuming, not the selfish but selfless person who receives God’s praise and honor. God’s son is the prime example of this alternative paradigm. He left his lofty position, humbled himself, entered into the world of the needy and helpless, and put the interests of others ahead of his own. He bore the cross and turned it into a symbol of love and hope.

In this Lenten season, a time of reflection and self-examination, let us ask ourselves if we have been bedazzled and misled by our society’s emphasis on being number 1. What are we boasting, our own accomplishments or that which Christ can do in and through us? May we be less self-centered, not focusing on me, and simply say, “Christ I give you my talents, skills and gifts; use them as you see fit for your kingdom purposes.”

JAN BENNETT
Missionary-In-Residence
Office of University Ministries

WEDNESDAY of HOLY WEEK, APRIL 1

Psalm 70
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Hebrews 12:1-3
John 13:21-32

Our scripture readings for today prove, at least to me, to be a little misleading. The words of the psalmist speak of a need for salvation that only Jesus could have foreseen a need for—two days before Good Friday. The words of the prophet Isaiah sound more clear and concise than I believe the teaching of Jesus, and understanding of his followers, would have been on this particular Wednesday. The words of the author of Hebrews bring to mind the kind of bold encouragement that would have come in the days following the resurrection of Jesus—it’s time to go forth in boldness—knowing that Jesus had defeated death. And even the words of John’s gospel are off by a day, describing some of the events of the Last Supper.

Yes, everything seems just a little bit off today.

And my guess is that is exactly how Jesus’ disciples were feeling on the Wednesday before Jesus’ eventual arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Why? Because after the kind of arrival to Jerusalem that Jesus and his disciples experienced on the previous Sunday (Matt. 21:1-11), and after the first few days that Jesus spent preaching and teaching in Jerusalem (Matt. 21:12-25:46), Jesus’ disciples had to have believed that they had a front row seat for something magical, even spectacular, that was about to unfold right before their eyes. They sensed, as did much of the crowd, that Jesus was clearly putting himself in opposition to the Roman Empire—and that the Messiah (Jesus) was about to usher in his kingdom by taking down the one that stood in front of him.

But what little we find written about this particular Wednesday tells us of an unexpected twist in the story (Matt. 26:6-16). First, we encounter the woman who pours an expensive bottle of perfume over Jesus’ head. His disciples wanted to scold her for such waste, but Jesus mentions how significant this act was, in preparing him for his burial. (Wait—what?!) And this story is immediately followed by the story of Judas—plotting to betray Jesus into the hands of those who would take his life (Nol).

On this particular Wednesday there could have been no way for Jesus’ disciples to have known what was coming. In many ways, it was just another day of following Jesus. It was like any other day.

GUY CHMIELESKI
University Minister
Office of University Ministries
In Dostoevsky’s novel, The Idiot, he tells the story of a man sentenced to death who spent 20 minutes “absolutely convinced he was going to die,” and then received official pardon at the very last moment. Dostoevsky writes that the man “would never forget anything about those minutes” in that interval of time between his sentence and his pardon. During this time the man drunk deeply of all around him: the people, the cobblestone street, the scaffolding… Then the man looked and “Not far away there was a church, and its gilt roof gleamed in the bright sun. He remembered that he gazed with terrible intensity at that roof and the rays of sun that sparkled from it; he could not take his eyes from those rays of light; it seemed to him this light was his new nature and that in three minutes he would somehow melt into it.” The man was being overwhelmed by this lighted scene and suddenly thought, “What if I was not to die! What if life was given back to me! What an eternity! And it would all be mine! I would turn each minute into a century! I would miss nothing. I would reckon each passing minute and waste nothing!”

How much do we miss?

Maundy Thursday is the day on the liturgical calendar that precedes Good Friday. It commemorates the Last Supper that Jesus had with his disciples. But what does it mean to have finished eating? To have a last meal? To be done with eating here on earth forever? If I knew that the meal I was eating was to be my last, I would certainly not take it for granted and would savor every bite.

For Dostoevsky’s character, as soon as he received that death sentence, every moment in time blazed with holiness. And I daresay that Jesus, there with his friends during that last meal before his death, saw that ordinary bread and wine and those familiar faces all burning with holiness. We miss that holy beauty in the world too often only because we take it for granted. We take it for granted because it is all around us all the time. The Last Supper reminds us that any normal, uninteresting moment can erupt in holy flame. We just have to be on the lookout.

STEPHEN REGISTER
Adjunct Instructor
College of Theology and Christian Ministry

We come to the end of Holy Week. As we have read Scripture together this week and we have walked with Jesus from the celebration at the gates of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday through the conflict of the week all the way to the Passover table.

He has been betrayed and where he goes now we cannot follow. The crowds who have followed him throughout Galilee and cheered him as he entered the city just days ago have all disappeared. Maybe, we would stand with Mary Magdalene, or Mary the wife of Clopas, or even Mary, his mother, at the foot of the cross.

It is likely, though, we would be long gone like nearly all the disciples and every one else. He is alone and what he must do for us he must do alone. The Synoptic Gospels have Jesus cry aloud, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me,” as he hangs on the cross near death. It is Jesus quoting Scripture, our own Psalm 22.1 from our readings for today.

The Gospel of John tells of his death in a different way. In John’s gospel, Jesus simply says, “It is finished” (John 18.30). He then bowed his head and gave up his spirit (v. 31). He dies for us.

The wonder of the gospels is the way they tell us of Jesus from varied angles. None of them tell the story exactly the same way and when we read of his life in each gospel we discover him anew.

This much is true and certain on Good Friday. It is finished.

All that Jesus came to do to bear the sins of the world on his shoulders now is finished. As we wait through the long hours between now and Easter morning, let us remember it is finished. The new beginning is coming. We wait. Jesus has gone on ahead of us. We wait for Easter.

DARRELL GWALTNEY
Dean
College of Theology and Christian Ministry
Thousands of years ago on this Holy Saturday, Jesus’ family, friends and followers awoke feeling separated from their rabbi. Jesus had just died on the cross, and in man’s eyes, they believed He was gone forever. I can imagine the heartache, despair and loneliness they suffered, as there have been times in my life when the Lord has seemed distant to me. There are times in the faith journey when it feels as if the Lord has turned His face. However, I know this feeling is completely contrary to the loving and honest character of our Lord and Savior.

Through experience, we know God to be the Almighty and Everlasting One. God is a strong fortress and a source of refuge. All times are in His hands, and His plans are perfect and better than anyone could ever imagine. And most of all, especially during this Easter season, we proclaim that God’s love is steadfast as He sent His only Son to die for our sins and to rescue us. If we believe all of this and know it to be true, then why, at times, do we project our feelings of loneliness to mean that God has turned His back on us? When in reality, this emotion is allowing a different type of the Lord’s presence to enter our lives—a deeper presence. I have learned that in my brokenness, I must rely on the trust I have placed in the Lord and in His character. It is in our brokenness that we demonstrate our true faith, as we live it out in the dark. Darkness calls for surrender to the person who can turn on the light. It is then through this surrender that we achieve a deeper union with the Lord. When we surrender and live out our faithful trust, we will wake up every morning seeking Jesus’ risen body at the tomb.

HANNAH FLETCHER
Sophomore
Christian Ethics and Business Management

After the Sabbath, the women returned to the tomb expecting to find Jesus’ body. It makes sense since it was the last place they knew Him to be. In the midst of their grief, of their confusion, they went looking for Jesus where they thought they would find Him. The Easter season finds many of us doing this very thing. We are looking for Jesus in places we think He will be. We seek out the places we last experienced Him and believe if we could just get there again- we will find Him.

What we learn from the life, and death, of the Incarnate God is that He is seldom confined to logical geography. His lowly birth in a stable is the first of many examples that God shows up in unexpected ways and in the most uncommon (to us) of places. We often believe that His presence is limited to the sacred places or the holy moments, but scripture tells us another story. To the women at the tomb, the disciples on the road and to us today, Jesus appears in the midst of ordinary moments of our days. In those moments we are grieving, when we are living in community with one another or when we are simply going about our day to day work; we are assured that we can find Jesus.

So on this day when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, we are reminded once again of the promise of the empty tomb. We are reminded that often He is not found where we expect Him to be. When we look for Him, we must remember the wonder of His birth and the power of His resurrection and look with new eyes.

May we live our lives in such a way that anticipates the appearance of Jesus in, and through, all things and situations. He is not here, He is risen!

CHRISTY RIDINGS
Associate University Minister and Director of Spiritual Formation
Office of University Ministries
OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY MINISTRIES

MISSION

We exist to...

- Foster a culture of worship and spiritual formation at Belmont.
- Cultivate lives of intentional service to God and to others through church and outreach.
- Promote the integration of all University life including academic, co-curricular and residential.
- Ultimately, University Ministries equips students to engage and transform the world by loving God and loving people.

WAYS YOU CAN BE INVOLVED

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NEAR 48

A residence-hall based discipleship/spiritual formation ministry that is designed to engage first-year students in on-campus community. You can connect to intentional Christian community through your Spiritual Life Assistant.

OUTREACH

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Immersions: Fall & Spring break trips to national destinations to be immersed in service, culture and love of neighbor.

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COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

VISION

The College of Theology and Christian Ministry seeks to be a premier academic community that nurtures a living faith in God, reflects critically on its discipline, develops skills for Christian ministry and distinguishes itself through its emphases on contemplative spirituality and social justice.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the College of Theology & Christian Ministry is to provide student-centered, academically challenging religion classes to the diverse student body of Belmont University and to provide a foundation of religious studies for students preparing for congregational ministry and advanced theological studies.

GOALS

- To provide all Belmont students with a solid foundation in Biblical and theological studies.
- To teach courses for religion majors and minors in the following areas: Biblical languages, Biblical studies, religion and society, theological and historical studies, practical studies, seminars and special studies. To offer professional education courses in practical ministry.
- To offer continuing education opportunities to ministers and laity.
- To integrate contemplative spirituality and social justice into the curricular and co-curricular program.

COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY & CHRISTIAN MINISTRY FACULTY AND STAFF

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Dr. Robert Byrd, Greek and New Testament (Emeritus)
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Dr. David Dark, Religion and the Arts
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Dr. Judy Skeen, Biblical Studies & Spiritual Formation
Dr. Andy Watts, Christian Ethics

COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY

AND CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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GOALS

- To provide all Belmont students with a solid foundation in Biblical and theological studies.
- To teach courses for religion majors and minors in the following areas: Biblical languages, Biblical studies, religion and society, theological and historical studies, practical studies, seminars and special studies. To offer professional education courses in practical ministry.
- To offer continuing education opportunities to ministers and laity.
- To integrate contemplative spirituality and social justice into the curricular and co-curricular program.

COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY & CHRISTIAN MINISTRY FACULTY AND STAFF

Dr. Marty Bell, Church History
Dr. Robert Byrd, Greek and New Testament (Emeritus)
Dr. Manuel Cruz, Theology
Dr. David Dark, Religion and the Arts
Dr. Ben Curtis, Pastoral Care & Spiritual Formation
Dr. Darrell Gwatney, Dean
Dr. Steve Guthrie, Theology & Religion and the Arts
Dr. Sally Holt, Christian Ethics

Ms. Debbie Jacobs, Assistant to the Dean
Dr. Donovan McAlbee, Religion and the Arts
Dr. Mark McEntire, Hebrew & Old Testament
Dr. Amanda Miller, Greek & New Testament
Dr. Steven Simpler, Theology
Dr. Judy Skeen, Biblical Studies & Spiritual Formation
Dr. Andy Watts, Christian Ethics

CHRISTIAN STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS

Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM), Belmont Catholic Community (BCC), Belmont Wesley Fellowship (BWF), Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU), Chadasha Gospel Choir, Ukirk, Reformed University Fellowship (RUF), Christian Law Society, Christian Pharmacy Fellowship International, Nurses Christian Fellowship, Belmont Greek Ministries, Men’s and Women’s Communities

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY MINISTRIES STAFF

Dr. Guy Chmielinski, University Minister
Christy Ridings, Associate University Minister, Director of Spiritual Formation & Discipleship
Micah Weedman, Associate University Minister, Director of Outreach
Robin McLeod, University Ministries Assistant

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