

Journey through



Lent



A Disciples Seminary Foundation Devotional



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An Invitation:

We are pleased that you will be journeying with us through Lent this year. In these challenging times, it is important that we all take time to reflect, remember, and prepare to celebrate the hope that we find in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The devotions that you find inside these pages represent the beautiful diversity of the DSF Family. You will find words from DSF staff, students, graduates, and board members and a diversity of theological, cultural, and social perspectives.

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Transgression. Iniquity. Sin. Bloodguiltiness (i.e., shedding another's blood or suffering a blood injury). Attributed to David, the psalmist bares his soul; his words painfully confessing that he is broken, thoroughly broken. Stunned, we instantly recognize this is no trivial appeal to a deity that is distant and disinterested in his behavior. Our psalmist expresses for all to hear an intense, personal relationship. In a state of misery and despair, knowing that his sins are a direct threat to his relationship with God, could he, can he, with any integrity, appeal for mercy from this God he loves so much?

In anguish, he states: "Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being. And in the hidden part, Thou wilt make me know wisdom" (v. 6, NASB).

The psalmist's reality is mine. I am equally broken.

I cannot hide anything from God. I—we—are as guilty as the psalmist. Human and broken. Not confined to Lent, my sins, transgressions, and iniquities daily stalk me and threaten my relationship with God.

But is there hope—hope that God will even hear our entreaties? The psalmist certainly believes so. His words paint a clear picture that he knows his God can be approached with such openness: "According to the greatness of Thy compassion, blot out my transgressions" (v. 1b).

My humanness is starkly revealed to the God I love. My status, agency, and sense of self-importance are cast aside, as I begin to climb the path toward the Cross. With each step, I carry the yoke of sinfulness. With each step, though, I also carry the Spirit of Hope, my spiritual breath for the climb ahead.

The psalmist's final words, the journey's end: "A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (v. 17b).

For God loves me even more.

Prayer: *As I walk this Lenten journey, O Lord, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." In Christ's name I pray, Amen.*



Rev. Dr. David Waggoner is serving his second year as Chair of the DSF Board of Trustees. He celebrates 40 years of ordination in the Disciples of Christ this year. His ministries have included serving as a college vice president and dean and a hospital chaplain. He lives in Eugene, Oregon with his wife and their dog.

As we enter into this season of preparation, I am mindful of all the ways that our world today feels like the wilderness in which the Israelites were wandering when Moses shared the instructions in Deuteronomy 26. They had left behind the oppression, forced labor, harsh treatment, and toil of Egypt, but they hadn't arrived at their promised future. The worst was presumably behind them, but the uncertainty of the present sometimes felt worse than the past. Why does that happen? Is it a problem of perspective? Why is it that when things get hard, we are tempted to romanticize the past and think that a metaphorical return to Egypt is better than what lies ahead? Have we forgotten God's promises? Have we lost sight of God's presence with us even on our darkest days as individuals, people of faith, and citizens of this world? Have we forgotten about the power of the resurrection? If we believe that God is great enough to lead the Israelites out of slavery, through the wilderness, and into the promised land; if we believe that God was powerful enough to raise Jesus from the grave, then surely God is bigger than our pain, chaos, and circumstances.

As we contemplate the challenges we face in the United States today: unsheltered people; innocent lives lost to senseless gun violence; people continuing to be treated as less-than because of their physical ability or the color of their skin; food deserts filled with hungry families; words of hatred against people seen as "other" due to their sexual orientation, mental health, or their country of origin; discrimination based on age or gender; or one of a host of other challenges, it is easy to become overwhelmed. It is in these times that the words of Moses still ring true and leave us with hope. Moses speaks of a day in the future when the Israelites, together with the foreigners who reside among them, will celebrate together the bounty of the Holy One their God, and when all of the most vulnerable among them—from the foreigners to the orphans and widows—will have their basic needs met through the work of the people of God.

Prayer: *God, help us to see how you are calling us to learn and grow, and may our faith in the power of the resurrection and the truth of your promises be renewed so that we can continue to do your work in this world. Amen.*



Rev. Jenny Crosswhite is DSF's Creative Director. She is also the pastor of the First Christian Church of Santa Paula and was recently re-elected for a second term on the Santa Paula City Council.

Life in a border city comes with many opportunities. Life in a border city also comes with its challenges. And sometimes, life in a border city comes with both at the same time. There exists a ministry network that seeks to find refuge for those who are applying for asylum in the United States. This network, known as Safe Harbors, coordinates housing, food, clothing, and transportation for documented asylum-seekers who would otherwise be confined to Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers. This is a ministry of love that demonstrates the radical love of God. The love that places value on all humanity regardless of lines drawn on a map. Yet, it is these very lines that define whether someone is authorized to enter the United States. Those authorized to enter into the asylum process, but who are restricted to live in the area until their hearing, are brought to Safe Harbors by ICE officials. Safe Harbors becomes their refuge during this wait period. What better source for this refuge than those who put God's love into action? In the United States, we often take for granted things such as shelter, food, water, and clothing. Safe Harbors provides these items.

Just like these necessary items, many of us take for granted other needs in our lives as well. For instance, God's promise to remain steadfast and to unconditionally love us. Psalm 91 is a powerful affirmation about how to trust God. It has been interpreted over the centuries by many theologians. The universal approach is that Psalm 91 is "God Centered." It has been used to remind us that God's care remains steadfast as ever. Just like the volunteers who serve Safe Harbors, Psalm 91 reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Safe Harbors lives out the attributes of this message and trusts that God will love and guide them in their efforts. As we enter into this season of Lent, we are encouraged to place our trust in God to experience refuge.

Prayer: *Creator God, provide us the ability to know that you are always with us. Bring us confidence that we can live out your love by housing people when no one else will, feeding people when no one else will, and sheltering people when no one else will. Amen.*



Clifford "Rip" Rippetoe is a DSF/CST student (M.Div.) and the Director of Ministries at Pacific Beach Christian Church in San Diego. He is a commissioned pastor within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He has been approved for ordination and plans to be ordained on June 1. Rip is also the President & CEO of the San Diego Convention Center Corporation.

What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ? In verse 9, Paul explains it means to confess with the mouth and have faith in the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. Paul's reference to both mouth and heart is significant. Firstly, confession with the mouth signifies the "speaking out" of truthfulness and underlying value, beyond just linguistic expression. Subsequently, it leads those who confess to recognize practical responsibility. In other words, confession entails the process of "speaking out to living out." Secondly, having faith in something means a kind of core life value, beyond just adding a piece of knowledge. In this vein, having faith in Jesus Christ means that each believer establishes their own life based on the values and lessons that Jesus embodied as His way to present God's will through His life. Therefore, having faith that God raised Jesus from the dead, that is, believing in the resurrection of Jesus, means a whole change, from the heart to daily actions. More importantly, one has to grasp the theological significance of God's raising Jesus from the dead. Death is what human beings are most afraid of and what they want to avoid because it surpasses human understanding and inevitably means the end of everything. It is impossible to see something hopeful in the place of death. According to Paul, however, God proclaims hope at the hopeless moment through the resurrection of Jesus. Even when everyone says that there would be no hope, God paradoxically proclaims, "No! Hope already exists at the situation of hopelessness if you would have faith in the resurrection of Jesus." Therefore, Christian faith has a paradoxical characteristic that cannot be understood by logical thinking because it always says "hope" in any devastating situation, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus. As God was with Jesus at the cross and raised Jesus from the dead, God will be with us and lead us to the place of hope in any moment and situation. That is the faith to believe in the resurrection of Jesus and confess it by mouth and heart.

Prayer: *Loving God! Thank you for guiding us to Jesus Christ. Let us look at the cross and resurrection of Jesus and awake our sleeping faith. With our mouths and hearts, please make us speak out and live out the truthfulness and value of the resurrection of Jesus. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*



Rev. Kyungmok Lee is a DSF/CST student (MA). He is also the Children's Education Director at Downey Memorial Christian Church and Korean Liaison at CST's Advancement & Communications Office.

The narrative of the temptation of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke offers us some important wisdom to meditate on as we journey through this season of Lent. This story has been uplifted to promote the importance of devoting oneself to a Lenten journey of spiritual practices in isolation. While retreating in isolation is indeed a very important thing to do on a regular basis, the narrative in Luke offers us a different perspective. In Luke's narrative, the Spirit was *in* Jesus when he went to the wilderness. Jesus was *full* of the Spirit, ready to take on whatever came at him on that journey. When the devil approached Jesus with enticing offers using scripture, Jesus didn't respond with his own words; Jesus, filled with the Spirit and his knowledge of Scripture, rebuked the tempter. The devil tried to tempt Jesus to abandon his identity and purpose, but Jesus was grounded. Our Lenten aim should not be to isolate oneself with pious goals, rejecting our humanity and community; it is about being right smack in the middle of whatever wilderness life throws at us because we are already *full* of the Spirit. Spiritual practices are not things that we practice during a special time. Living in Scripture, prayer, and fasting is a lifelong process that fills us with the Spirit so that we can be able to journey through whatever wilderness we may encounter. After Jesus was tempted, he went back to the towns (4:14-44), with the Holy Spirit fully manifested in Him, speaking and liberating with authority. Jesus went to his people fully grounded, ready to cast out demons, heal the sick, empower others to lead alongside him, and face whatever needed to be faced so that the message of love could reach us all. God is calling us into the wilderness already *full* of the Spirit so that we may come out knowing who God has called us to be and what God has called us to do. God is calling us to be ready now. God is calling us to be full of the Spirit, stand firm, and speak with God's authority against the forces of evil that cause division and oppression.

Prayer: *Spirit of strength, love, and truth, flow through me like the oxygen that flows through my body and keeps me alive. Nag at me daily to reject my own hunger for bread and for power. Instead, fill me with a spiritual hunger that seeks justice, compassion, and love. Fill me with strength to be the hands and feet that build God's kin-dom here on earth now. Amen.*



Yvette Hernandez is a DSF/CST student (M.Div.). She graduated from Chapman University with a BA in Modern American History. She is married to a P.K., David Becerra, Jr., and has been blessed with a sweet and energetic five-year-old son, James A. Becerra. She is part of the worship team at her church, Iglesia Cristiana del Este de Whittier, and enjoys singing at regional events. She has a passion for ecumenical and social justice work and participates in youth/young adult ministry anytime she can.

Christians usually assume that Jesus and the Pharisees were enemies. After all, the Pharisees and Jesus are always arguing over aspects of the law, and more than once the Pharisees serve as a foil for Jesus' teaching. But it's more likely that Jesus and the Pharisees were allies and friends, and that the disputes we see them having are evidence that they were trying to hold community across difference—something we Disciples know all about.

Think about it. We are more likely to have disagreements with people who are closer to us than we are with people who are completely different. Our biggest religious debates are with people who agree with us 95% of the time, not people whose beliefs have nothing in common with ours. We Disciples are more likely to engage in arguments with Baptists or Methodists—or each other—than with practitioners of Shinto or Australian aboriginal religion.

That's the dynamic we see with Jesus and the Pharisees. In this passage from Luke, a group of Pharisees is giving a warning to Jesus about Herod, telling Jesus to move on before Herod is able to kill him. This is the kind of heads-up you would give to a friend, not to an enemy. The Pharisees have some inside information about Herod's intentions, and they are telling it to Jesus in hopes of helping him out. This closeness of their relationship is confirmed in the very first verse of the next passage after this one, Luke 14:1, where Jesus is seen eating a Sabbath meal at the house of a leader of the Pharisees.

Disciples have a long history of working hard to hold community across difference. It's one of the cornerstones of our movement. Like Jesus and the Pharisees, sometimes we have our differences, but we also know that if we do the hard work of unity, we can end up sitting at the table together, even when we don't fully agree all of the time.

Prayer: *God, give us grace to understand each other and be in community with each other, even when we don't agree on everything. Meet us at our common table. Amen.*



Rev. Dr. Eric C. Smith is DSF's Director of Pastoral Formation at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, CO, where he is also Term Assistant Professor of the History of Christianity and New Testament Studies.

Why do bad things happen to good people? This age-old question seems to rise again in this passage unique to Luke. Here in verses 1-5, the reader hears reference to two horrific events, one perpetrated upon innocent people by the government and the other a natural disaster resulting in the death of many people. The crowd wonders aloud to Jesus, “Why did these things happen? Was it punishment for their sins?” Jesus doesn’t engage that question directly, but reminds the listeners that the victims were no better or worse than others and then calls them to repentance.

I struggle with this passage because it seems to be calling the hearer to get right with God lest some tragedy befalls you. Yet there is another way to hear Jesus’ words. Perhaps instead, Jesus is acknowledging that tragedies happen, some human caused and others just tragic events. Knowing that, Jesus is reminding us that life is fragile and not to be taken for granted. Drawing closer to God, or turning again to God, allows us to live life to the fullest.

Jesus then goes on to tell a parable of a fig tree recorded in verses 6-9. The fig tree was three years old and had not borne fruit. What good was it? But the gardener begged for more time, and not just time, but opportunity to nourish and encourage and draw the best fruit from the tree.

Taken together, these two vignettes remind us that life is unpredictable and fragile, but within this life is the opportunity to draw closer to God. In return, God promises to nurture and encourage us into the fullness of life. In this passage, we are given a choice: when faced with the realities that tragedy can and does strike, how will we respond? Jesus calls us to embrace life, seek God’s presence, and find life abundant.

Prayer: *Gracious God, help us to seize this moment to draw closer to you, that in turn we might experience fullness of life in you and share that life with others. Amen.*



Rev. Sandy Messick serves on the DSF Board of Trustees. She is also the Regional Minister of the Northwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Interim Regional Minister for the Montana Region. She lives in Spokane, WA with her husband, Tom, and two cats, Max and Oliver. They have two young adult children, Sarah and John.

You Going to the Party? A Party? In Lent? You mean Fat Tuesday? Noooooo. There's quite a celebration coming up, though. Are you going? This month, we'll hear about an oldie but a goodie: "Parable of the Prodigal Son." With a title like that, it's no wonder that the prodigal son has received so much attention in our interpretation; however there are more characters in this story. Luke's central parable is not only about the journey of an individual family member, it is also one of family dynamics. The story begins with the younger son taking an early inheritance and migrating to a distant land, where he received little return on his investments. Once in a position to have others work for him and his family, the younger brother, now in a foreign country and funds depleted, contracts himself out for labor. It's when his palate became accustomed to only leftovers and his own sweat that the younger brother began to contemplate his predicament. He sets out to return to his father's estate with the intention of working as a hired hand for him, as he has realized that he has squandered sonship. The second act of the story centers on the varied reception of the younger son. The father shows unbridled mercy, rushes to meet him and rejoices at his return. He doesn't ask about the inheritance. Indeed there is no inquiry, only embrace. On the other hand, the older brother holds little back, accusing his younger brother of partying away a portion of the family estate on prostitutes and disdains the fact that his father is hosting a celebration in honor of the return of his younger brother. The parable ends with the father pleading with the older brother to join the celebration. We aren't told whether or not the older brother joins—we *have to make that decision. Will we join the celebration?* Jesus in this masterful parable demonstrates that God is a God of mercy, and so if we are going to join in the communal celebration of God, then we must also partake in God's ethic of mercy. There is no room for qualifiers to join the banquet. The father accepted the lost just as he was. God accepts us just as we are. The question this parable then poses for us is, *do we accept others* just as they are? So, see you at the banquet?

Prayer: *God, we pray that you keep us humble, checking our privilege and making ever expansive our sense of sibling relations in your kin-dom. Challenge our perceptions of being and belonging in relation to others and continue to gently whisper in our souls each day that we are found.*



Rev. Marvin Lance Wiser is a DSF/GTU student (Ph.D.). He is part of a wonderful Mexican-American family and an Associate Minister in Hayward, CA. He is passionate about migrant justice work, table ministry, coffee, Latin American gastronomy, and analog music—especially jazz.

Extravagant. The word so often carries negative connotations. Unreasonable. Absurd. Inappropriate. Over the top. Yet, the stories surrounding Jesus consistently exhibit extravagance. Turning more water into wine than could ever be needed; moving beyond thoughts and prayers to actually heal people; breaking cultural and religious boundaries; extending welcome to outsiders; managing 12 baskets of leftovers after feeding 5,000 people when there was not enough to share to begin with; and, finally, bringing a dead man back to life.

Jesus' extravagant acts lead to the invitation to dinner with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Once dead and in a tomb, Lazarus sits ready to celebrate life. Martha prepares the feast. And Mary kneels at Jesus' feet. Now she follows in Jesus' extravagant ways. She breaks open a jar of expensive perfume. She anoints Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair.

As expected, she receives criticism for this inappropriate display. But nothing can stop her from expressing her deep gratitude and love. No rules of etiquette, no cultural expectation can get in the way of what she must do. Mary sees better than anyone the extravagant nature of Jesus' love and responds in equal measure. This is the God of extravagance. Extravagant love. Extravagant mercy. Extravagant welcome and embrace. The God who holds back nothing. The God who will not be contained by human rules of conduct. The God who puts it all on the line.

So as Jesus sits in her home with a bounty on his head for bringing her dead brother back to life, as he sits there days before Passover and all that awaits him, Mary gives her 100%. Mary holds back nothing. She experiences God's extravagance in the most profound part of her being and from this same place frees herself for her own extravagant response.

Prayer: *Extravagant God, help us set aside the distractions and the hardness within us that keep us from recognizing your extravagance. Free us to follow in your extravagant ways of mercy, justice, and love.*



Rev. Ailsa Guardiola Gonzalez is a member of the DSF Board of Trustees. Pastor. Mother. Wife. Fan of the underdog. Eternal optimist. Believes in the power of community, music that touches the soul, shared meals that bring people together, and seeing the world through the hope of God's transformative justice.

David is too tired and in pain. So he cries, “Every night, I drench my bed with tears; I soak my couch all the way through.” (v. 6) Where does such unbearable sadness come from? “Evildoers” bring it to him. David shouts out, “Get away from me, all you evildoers!” (v. 8) Who are they to him? What do they do to him? When they are angry, they punish him. They have no mercy on him, when they know that he is frail. They want to cruelly break his bones instead of saving him.

David knows that he is not “perfect” and recognizes himself as a weak and erroneous person. And he knows how hard he must endure many kinds of attacks by people who are surrounding him. So he becomes so distressed and his vision fails because of his grief. However, he never gives up his faith in God who hears his cries. He declares, “The Lord has listened to my request. The Lord accepts my prayer.” (v. 9) And there is a prophecy. All evildoers will be defeated and ashamed.

Reading this Psalm of David, I think of myself in different ways. I may get angry by other people’s behaviors, but I cannot punish them myself. I may be bothered by the frailness of other people, but I cannot accuse them mercilessly. I may be depressed by the defeating attacks by other people, but I cannot have revenge against them. The fact that God is listening to our voices lets me know of two possibilities to solve my predicaments: judgment and salvation. I believe that God will transform us as more mature human beings who can forgive and understand each other. I believe that God will “judge” the incurable “evildoers” who reject God’s voices for their repentance.

Prayer: *Gracious God, give us the power to examine and repent from the evil that still might be alive in our hearts. We praise God who has listened to our crying and accept our prayers. Amen.*



Rev. Jinsuk Chun is a Disciples ordained pastor and serves as the Director of Mission and Peace Education at DSF and Co-Pastor of Sallims Christian Church in Newport Beach, CA.

The two nations in the story of the *Potter's House* remind me of *The Parable of the Two Sons* (Matthew 21:28-32). In this parable, one son initially says no to his father's request to go work in his field, but later he changes his mind and he does go, while the second son initially says yes, but later he changes his mind and he does not go. In many ways, the two sons are like the two nations in our text (vv. 7-9):

- The first nation initially does the wrong thing, but later does the right thing.
- The second nation initially does the right thing, but later does the wrong thing.

What the two sons and the two nations have in common is that both are marred in *the hands of the potter*, and the same is true for all of us (1 John 1:8). Whether we start out in obedience to God and later fall into disobedience, or we start out in disobedience and later we clean-up our acts, we are all still marred.

As we reflect on the great sacrifice Jesus made for us during this season of Lent, let us also be mindful of the need we all have to be "*made again into new vessels*." Jesus is the Perfect Son, and in Him is found the Perfect Nation. In Christ Jesus, we are "reborn" and by His great sacrifice, we are heirs to a Heavenly Nation.

Prayer: *Gracious and Merciful God, we thank you for another season of Lent to reflect on the great sacrifice your son Jesus made for us and to remember His resurrection. God, we believe you are able to make us over again in your Hand and we are thankful for your unconditional love and unrelenting care. Amen!*



Rev. Darrell Haley is a DSF/CST student (D.Min.). A member of the DOC since 1987, Darrell serves the PSWR in the following capacities: Senior Pastor of South Pasadena Christian Church, the General Board, the Regional Board/Executive Committee, the African-American Convocation, and Seed Planters III. He has a BS in Business Administration/Marketing from the University of California, Berkeley, and an M.Div. from Biola University.

❧ Wednesday, April 10, 2019 ❧
Judges 9:7-15

Power, Parables and Palace Intrigue – The scriptural assignment for my devotional writing was Judges 9:7-16. I blinked when I saw that. To be honest, the last time I preached from the Book of Judges was—not recently. And the last time I studied the Book of Judges was—even less recently! I doubt I am alone! So, I was going to have to do some serious scriptural interpretation, insightful reading and profound study—ah yes, that is what regular solid biblical reflection requires!

Television writers are missing a lot here in Judges 8 and 9 as the story has all the shadings of *Games of Thrones*. Should Israel have a king or not? Should Gideon be that king or not? Can Gideon manipulate the common people out of their gold for his own wealth? Can the son of a concubine ascend to power by murdering all 40 of his competitors? Can an ancient parable about the wealth of the land—date trees, fig trees, grape vines versus useless bramble bushes—point us toward any life lessons for Lent 2019? If it seems like a stretch from the symbolic golden ephods of Israel worship to our own sanctuaries to our own back yards, here are a few questions for our Lenten journey.

- ...Where in your world do you see manipulative power preying on the less fortunate to build ego-centered dynasties?
- ...Where have you used your own personal power to gain your own advantage over someone/something?
- ...When have you ignored/eliminated the voices/dignity/visions of others to raise station/status/position for yourself?
- ...Have you threatened to withdraw the fruitful gifts of your leadership unless you get your own way?
- ...Have you directly or indirectly intimidated “you’ll be sorry” for not yielding to my ideas/my plan?

Prayer: *God of Compassion and Justice for ALL...May the ancient truths of Judges 8 and 9 speak to our hearts this day. May we be empowered to choose compassion over privilege, service over status, and grace over grandstanding. In the name of the One who offers us such power, even our Brother Jesus. Amen.*



Rev. Dr. Ben Bohren is a member of the Executive Committee of the DSF Board of Trustees. Ben is a retired Disciples minister of over 50 years with local pastoral, campus, General, and Regional Ministry service. He lives in Palm Springs, CA.

We live in a day and age when anything goes. It is really up to you. A very common phrase heard quite often these days is this: If it feels good, just do it! This has become a common interpretation of our mental, emotional, and even spiritual posture these days! Everything seems to be all about US!! Our “I” statements replace the “Hisness” of God. We feel equal with God in the sense that we don’t really need a savior. We can decide whether or not we will obey the commandments of God or just the ones that are comfortable or acceptable to us. We end up judging ourselves by ourselves! The text expresses this in 2 Corinthians 10:12. This is what we tell ourselves: I’ve got this – I really don’t need a savior. I can do this. I will be an Abraham Jr. and sleep with the maid as a way to satisfy the word of the Lord and basically help the Lord! Abraham’s conversation could have gone something like this: *OK God, my wife is so old that she laughs at me every time I approach her to be with her! So I (notice the “I”) need to find a way to have the son you promised me. “I” need to help you establish the nation you promised out of my loins. “I” will find a way to have a son! OK, I’ve got it! “I” will sleep with the maid. My wife says it is ok, and “I” REALLY don’t mind God!!!! So “I” am good with this decision! Thanks God, you’re a pal! So, like Abraham, we find ourselves setting our own standards, living by our own rules! Abraham had choices and so do we! Be encouraged today to serve God by putting away the “I” and receive the “we” in communion with the Trinity. With the help of our crucified Christ, we can put away thoughts, ideas, ideals, even our own ways that attempt to rule and reign. There is only room in our lives for one leader, one King, and that is King Jesus! Ride with King Jesus! Jesus paid it all so we wouldn’t have to! Be encouraged to know that the choices we make in life are so very important. It is up to us as to whether we remain true to what we think and feel or what our Sovereign Creator wants for our lives. A. W. Tozer said that to KNOW GOD is to fear God and to be stunned by the splendor of God’s majesty. What a joy that Jesus has pathed the way for us into the “Holy Place.” And last but not at all least: GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS WORD!*

Prayer: *Awesome and Mighty One, help me to trust you enough to wait on you. I am grateful that you ALWAYS keep your word!*



Carolyn Anderson is a third-year DSF/SFTS student (M.Div.) who is preparing for ordination within the family of the Disciples of Christ. She is a Music Educator of about 40 years and a dedicated worshipper.

This psalm is fundamentally about one question: what do we trust? When we are surrounded on all sides by our enemies, what convinces us to stand our ground? (v.10-14) When we are guilty, deserving to be punished severely, what convinces us that there is still life worth living? (v.17-18) When things are hopeless, where can we find hope? The answer here is very clear; we must look beyond people, who are mortal (v.8), and look instead to the One who is Immortal. “For his steadfast Love endures forever” (v.1-4). God’s love is steadfast precisely because God is unchanging. God is not subject to the stresses of mortality like us. The Hebrew word used for “princes” in v.9 is *Nadib*, which is used to describe not only political rulers, but any person who is upstanding and acts with nobility. Yes, political leaders should not be gods unto us, but neither should the genuinely good people in our lives. Because the role models we so adore are themselves merely mortal. They like us need to put their trust in a steadfast love beyond this world. This is not something to be mourned but is a cause for celebration! The spirit of this holy song is very clear: when one’s trust does not depend on people, one has no need to fear them. “With the Lord on my side I do not fear, what can mortals do to me?” (v.6) It is a reason to praise our God, a God who has created a world wherein we all must humble ourselves to receive what we really need, God’s unconditional love. A love that does not end because it existed before the beginning. It is love beyond mortality. Trusting in this love makes for a radical way of life. But we shouldn’t be afraid to live this way. The world may reject us, but that rejection is our initiation into God’s kingdom (v.22). When we are bold enough to reject this limited world, we will cry out for something better. And though this world will reject us in the process, we will become the rejected stones God is using to build the Kingdom; like Christ who came before us. We shouldn’t be afraid to put our trust in the ultimate love; we should be afraid to put it in anything else.

Prayer: *O God, I have taken refuge in the people of this world, but time and time again they have failed me. I see now that I will never be satisfied by anything less than your divine love. Come to me and I will celebrate you forever! May my commitment to your timeless love be as unstoppable as your love itself.*



Mitch McGill is a DSF/SFTS student (M.Div.). He works as a Chaplain’s Assistant and sings in the choir at SFTS. He served during the third year of NBA’s XPLOR program in Dallas, TX, working in outreach ministries for Northway Christian Church. He studied psychology at Westminster College, where he focused on the intersection between unconscious studies and mysticism. He hopes to work in ministry post-graduation.

“... I will arouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece and wield you like a warrior’s sword.” -Zechariah 9:13

Receiving and Passing Vision – Over 500 years before Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Zechariah saw a vision of what a King of God’s people will be and what they will do. The leader would be humble rather than entitled. The leader would move freely among the powerful and the marginalized, abhorring the systemic oppression that often accompanies power, whether it be the church or the government.

As we begin to close our Lenten season, I invite you to have a vision for your faith...a faith vision. Zechariah had a faith vision that took over 500 years and 20 generations to come into fruition. Jesus had a faith vision that we are currently living out. As we continue to live out our faith as Christians, where do we see our faith in the lives of our children, grandchildren, 10, 20 generations down the line?

In order to perpetuate such vision, one must be connected to many. If we look to our ancestors 20 generations ago, it consists of over 1 million people. You are the product of not just that million, but also another million from the succeeding generations who have propagated the genetics, traditions, knowledge, wealth, and most importantly, love, that makes you who you are. All this to say, you are the product of a million visionaries. The human Jesus was the spiritual progeny of not just Zechariah’s vision, but of his compatriots. You are not just the spiritual progeny of Jesus’s vision, but that of the Apostles and all of the people that Jesus touched in during his time. Your progeny is not just a product of your vision, but also the vision of your 1 million closest neighbors.

So as we envision our leaders of future generations, let us passionately share our visions far and wide joining them with one another, especially against the visions that would see us divided, oppressed, and marginalized.

Prayer: *Let me see my neighbor, Let me hear my neighbor, let me feel my neighbor so that our grandchildren will know the greatest love.*



Rev. Rene Martin is a DSF/CST graduate (M.Div./2018). He is the Co-Chairman of the Ecumenical Interfaith Relations Committee for the Pacific Southwest Region, sharing the vision of the Disciples with God’s faithful throughout the Southwest. He is married to the Rev. Lara Martin. They have 5 children.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the disciples “began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power they had seen” (v 37). The streets echoed with those shouts of praise, and people elsewhere in town could hear the clear Hallelujahs. Jesus told his disciples to keep shouting, but also reminded them that rocks would shout in joy even if disciples stopped their praise.

A week later, Joseph of Arimathea took the body of the crucified Jesus, placed it carefully in a tomb, and rolled a great stone to close the tomb. Imagine the sounds of the stone as Joseph moved it into place. Such a massive rock would audibly crunch the ground underneath as Joseph moved it inch by inch. Picture Joseph pushing against a great stone, all the while grunting, gasping, panting with his sheer exertion. Mary Magdalene and the “other” Mary watched, and imagine how loudly they cried as the stone sealed the tomb.

At dawn a few days later, Mary and Mary both heard the rock-splitting sounds of a great earthquake. The angel whose strength had unsealed the tomb calmly told the women to go and tell the news of Jesus’s inexplicable and real resurrection.

In Galilee, reunited with Jesus, his diverse coalition of followers begin to shout their joy and praise, the opening phrases of a world-wide concerto that expands through repeated worship, creating such an overwhelming sound of praise. Did the rocks shout too? No one knows, because Jesus’ followers’ praise was louder than any other sound, and nothing else could be heard.

We who follow Jesus should never use the stones as an excuse to stop our own shouts of praise and our frequent proclamation of the resurrection. Let the stones serve as musical accompaniment to the ways we give voice and song to salvation!

Prayer: *Our God, let us follow Jesus during this season of Lent, through struggle and hardship and past those obstacles, all the way to resurrection. Remind us to proclaim Christ every day – both Christ crucified and Christ resurrected. Amen!*



Rev. Dr. Jon Berquist is President of Disciples Seminary Foundation.