



“Reflections on the Light”

2022 Lenten Devotional

Dallas First Christian Church
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March 2

I Cannot Do This Alone

Lent prayer for Ash Wednesday

I Cannot Do This Alone

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

O God, early in the morning I cry to you.

Help me to pray

And to concentrate my thoughts on you;

I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness,

But with you there is light;

I am lonely, but you do not leave me;

I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help;

I am restless, but with you there is peace.

In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience;

I do not understand your ways,

But you know the way for me....

Restore me to liberty,

And enable me to live now

That I may answer before you and before men.

Lord whatever this day may bring,

Your name be praised.

Amen

March 3
The Mirror

Author Robert Fulghum tells this story of one of his professors, a wise man whose name was Alexander Papaderos.

At the last session on the last morning of a two-week seminar on Greek culture, Dr. Papaderos turned and made the ritual gesture—“Are there any questions?”

Quiet quilted the room. These two weeks had generated enough questions for a lifetime, but for now, there was only silence.

“No questions?” Papaderos swept the room with his eyes.

So, I asked.

“Dr. Papaderos, what is the meaning of life?”

The usual laughter followed, and people stirred to go.

Papaderos held up his hand and stilled the room and looked at me for a long time, asking with his eyes if I was serious and seeing from my eyes that I was.

“I will answer your question.”

Taking his wallet out of his hip pocket, he fished into a leather billfold and brought out a very small round mirror, about the size of a quarter. And he went something like this.

“When I was a small child, during the war, we were very poor and we lived in a remote village. One day, on the road, I found the broken pieces of a mirror. A German motorcycle had been wrecked in that place.

“I tried to find all the pieces and put them together, but it was not possible, so I kept only the largest piece. This one. And by scratching it on a stone, I made it round. I began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that I could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine—in deep holes and crevices and dark closets. It became a game for me to get light into the most inaccessible places I could find.

“I kept the little mirror, and as I went about my growing up, I would take it out in idle moments and continue the challenge of the game. As I became a man, I grew to understand that this was not just a child’s game but a metaphor for what I might do with my life. I came to understand that I am not the light or the source of the light. But light—truth, understanding, knowledge—is there, and it will only shine in many dark places if I reflect it.

“I am a fragment of a mirror whose whole design and shape I do not know. Nevertheless, with what I have I can reflect light into the dark places of this world—into the black places in the hearts of men—and change some things in some people. Perhaps others may see and do likewise. This is what I am about. This is the meaning of life.”

And then he took his small mirror and, holding it carefully, caught the bright rays of daylight streaming through the window and reflected them on my face and onto my hands folded on the desk.

(From *It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It* by Robert Fulghum. Copyright 1988, 1989 by Robert Fulghum. Adapted by permission of Villard Books, a division of Random House, Inc.)

March 4

The Origin of Lent

Lent! The name probably comes from an old Anglo Saxon word meaning “lengthen,” referring to the fact that days get longer in spring.

Jesus did not command the celebration of Lent.

There is no mention of Lent in the Bible.

Lent owes its origin to different customs that grew up in the Christian Church, and in the religions of the people that existed before the Christian faith was brought into Europe by the first missionaries.

Lent has been observed since 200 AD and begins on Ash Wednesday and extends for 40 days until Easter.

The 40 days representing the 40 days that Jesus fasted in the wilderness during his temptation (Matthew 4:1-11).

It became the practice of the Church to baptize new Christians early on Easter morning.

In the New Testament times it apparently was the practice to baptize people immediately upon their coming to faith.

Later when the Church was under persecution, it became customary for new Christians to undergo a lengthy period of instruction before an individual was considered worthy of membership.

This was simply a matter of survival.

So the time before Easter became a period of study, meditation and fasting for candidates for baptism.

Lent calls us to look back on the impact of our baptism on our lives.

Two sources of Lent remain part of our Lenten observance to this day.

One places emphasis on Jesus' activity and the other stresses our own preparation for Easter.

Disciples Seminary Foundation-2006

March 5

The Light in The Darkness

"The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." (John 1:5)

A hundred watts down the tubes. The light bulb in our garage had blown out.

Not a major catastrophe, but inconvenient all the same. We are somewhat spoiled, and yet fortunate to live in a day when we can simply walk to the hall closet, pull out another bulb and be back in the business instantly. However, light

was not this easy to come by in Jesus' day. Oil- burning lamps were a little more common than light bulbs.

The Scripture above says, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." At that time, the Jewish people were held captive by a Law that they could not fully obey. Figuratively, they were in the dark. This is one of the reasons God sent His Son. This light was and is the life of Jesus our Savior.

He is the one who can shed light on the problems in life we don't always understand. Conversely, He is also the One whose light exposes the deeds of those who would ignore and oppose Him. Christ is also the light and that gives us the vision and direction we need to walk daily in His will. Just as I cannot do laundry or change the oil in a garage without light, so also I cannot walk in God's will without the light of Christ's example before us in His Word.

Lord, take away my pride and help me to see that working in your light is easier than struggling in my own. Amen

Paul Johnson-2003

March 6 – First Sunday of Lent

We have the Spirit of Power -

God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6

How many times have we said ‘I’m afraid’? There is much in life that can cause us fear and overwhelm us. We may feel alone; we may feel empty; we may think that everything stands against us.

While we may feel and think this way, the reality is that we don’t have to fear the things of this world. When we trust in God, God becomes our helper, our protection, our Shepherd. When we trust in God and what God is doing in our lives, we can not only live in confidence without fear, we can live in power through the Holy Spirit which we have been given. Paul reminds Timothy and is also a reminder to us that, “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” 1 Timothy 1:6-7

Today, take some time to recognize and name what you may be fearing and confess them to God. Allow God to take those fears and to fill you with the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to live each day.

Thank you gracious God, for the power you have given to us to live each day. Thank you for continuing to remind us that we don’t have to live in fear of what’s around us but that we live in Your presence and power each day. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 7

Body of Christ

Matthew 22:37: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and with all your mind.

It takes many of our body parts to worship our Lord, Savior, Jesus Christ.

FEET: We keep our feet on the path of Jesus. This path keeps us from rushing into sin.

EYES: Look to Jesus. He gives sight to all of us who are blind. He lifts us up when we bow to Him.

HANDS: Reach out to Jesus. When holding His hand, we are guided by His love.

LIPS: Speak to Jesus in prayer. We keep our lips from deceitful speech.

HEART: This is our home for Jesus to live. It is with our heart we love the Lord our God.

Father in Heaven, help me daily to love you with all my feet, eyes, hands, lips and heart. In Jesus Name. Amen.

John Dodge

March 8

Are You Ready?

Matthew 24:44 – So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Part of preparing one of our devotional books sometimes involves going through the old books (we have them from

1989) and finding ones to reuse to fill out the number we need.

Many of the writers of those devotionals have gone home to be with the Lord, including Marvin & Jean Andersen, Stan Plummer, Bea Ottaway, Ambrose Huff, Leighton and Ruby Dashiell, Ada Thompson, Beulah Curtiss, Hazel McQuown, Janice Baker, Del Fredricks, Steve Cameron and many more. Thinking back on all these committed Christians, I can see how they all reflected the light of God's love through their words and their lives. Each one providing a part of the process to make sure we are ready. Ready for Easter. Ready to share our love. Ready to do God's will. Ready to go to Heaven.

Lord, help me to be a reflection of your love as I go through life and share Your love with others. Let us not forget all those who have gone before us and helped us prepare for what we are to do today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Marsha Heeter

March 9

I Am the Light

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Darkness can be a unsettling and even scary time to be in. It can be a physical darkness – a dark night, a dark

house, where a simple light, big or small, can make a huge difference in what we see and how we feel. It can also be an emotional or spiritual darkness brought on by fear, uncertainty, sin, etc. We all face these times in our life. In fact, there have been times where I thought I was 'in the light' but Jesus eventually showed me that I was stumbling around in the darkness.

In one of Jesus' most illuminating 'I Am' statements, Jesus gives us a great illustration of who He is in the world. Much of the world is dark, a darkness that is illuminated by the love and grace of Jesus and allows you and I to share that love and grace wherever we may go.

In our obedience to Jesus' Lordship in our lives, we can walk in the Light of who He is. Like walking through the woods at night with a flashlight, we can confidently take the next step even if we don't see the final destination. We can also be a beacon to others, a place of safety and comfort because the darkness is not complete.

The Light of Jesus lights our way and the light of life that we carry will expand into the darkness, pushing it back and creating a place of love, peace and grace in Jesus.

Illuminating God, Thank you for the light of Jesus in my life and the world today. Thank you that you have entrusted us to show that light to the world around us, wherever we may go. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 10

The Lord Needs Candles Too

Read Matthew 5:14-16

Distressed, I looked out on the world so torn by strife and sin

And felt a thrill of thankfulness For calm and peace within.

But pity surged up in my soul,

And through my tears I prayed,

“Oh, blessed Lord, how can I help?

lost souls, forlorn and strayed?

I wish I had an angel’s voice to sing of thy great love,

Or moving eloquence to cause their hearts to look above.

I’d like to be a tall light house.

So drifting lives might see my streaming ray, and in its path

Come safely home to Thee

But I am small and useless, Lord

There’s little I can do.”

Then, all at once, a whisper came,

“The Lord needs candles too.”

“Oh, wilt Thou light thy candle?”

I cried with heart aglow:

“Perhaps some soul will see its flame,

And know the way to go,”

So, let Him light your candle.

Although it may seem dim,

A thousand candles burning bright

Will guide a host to Him!

I have had the above in my Bible for years. It has been a favorite of mine. So let’s all let our lights shine for Jesus,

and thereby show that we serve a risen Savior, who's in the world today.

Heavenly father, help us always to remember that Jesus shed his blood, died on the cross for us, and rose again. Amen.

Phyllis Shoemate - 1993

March 11

The Light of That City

The light from that City still shines bright

As it's done for centuries untold

The best part is knowing what it's done for us

In helping us reach the Heavenly fold.

The light is like a million candles

Each twinkling from above

It brings us hope and our salvation

And reflects our Father's great love.

Let the radiance of that light glow within our hearts

As we seek to be an example each day.

Let us each strive to hold our candles high

That we may lead others in their daily way.

A light is only good if we let it shine

If we don't let its brightness grow dime

Let us ignite a flame in our sisters and brothers

And pray that we will keep our vision trim.

Jean Sarff

March 12

This Little Light of Mine

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify Your father which is in Heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

On January 7th during the big windstorm, we were in a position where our electric lights didn't shine. Forced to use candles that little light didn't shine very far. Instead of being like the little candlelight, we, as Christians should let our light shine as the higher-powered electric lights do, to glorify our heavenly father.

Heavenly Father, giver of every perfect gift, help us to make our gifts always gifts of love. Amen.

Phyllis Shoemate - 1990

March 13 – Second Sunday of Lent
God Will Provide

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:31-34

One of the things that we may fear or better said worry about, is where are we going to get our food, drink, clothes, and other things that we may need each day. In this teaching of Jesus, (and many other places in scripture) we are reminded that God does provide for our needs, and we don't need to worry about them. That doesn't necessarily mean that we sit back in our lazy boy and let the provisions roll in. We do participate in what God is doing.

We must trust that God will provide for our needs. This is demonstrated in scriptures throughout the Old and New Testament. I'll bet too, that it is shown in your life on a regular basis. I know it has been in mine.

Today, reflect on what God has provided through out your life. Reflect on what needs you may have and share them with God. Let us trust God for what we need as individuals, families and the church and walk in faithfulness with God.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do in my life and the life of the church. Gracious God, please continue to provide what we need as we seek Your Kingdom each day. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 14

Whiter Than Snow

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Psalm 51 :7

As I opened the front door, the sunlight on the snow almost blinded me. After a few moments, my eyes adjusted to the light, and I could clearly see the beautiful white carpet that covered the dirt and cement. As I made my way to the mailbox, the sun glistened on the snow, creating a path of sparkling crystal gems. The transformation was spectacular.

How wonderful it is that the same transformation has happened to me. God's cleansing does not merely cover my sins but purifies me so that I am clean on the inside, not just sparkly on the outside. When others look at me, they can see the bright reflection of God's light. Instead of sin, I now display the beauty of God's glory. The best part of this transformation is that it doesn't melt away in the spring. The changes God makes to the landscape of my soul are eternal, How grateful I am for God's love and power that makes the dinginess of my soul whiter than snow.

*PRAYER: Holy God, thank you for cleansing me from all my sin.
Amen.*

Lynn Karidis—Farmington Hills, Michigan

From the “Secret Place” for Thursday, January 13

March 15

The Light of the World

John 1:3-5; 3:16: The word had life in Himself, and the Life brought light to men, The light shines in darkness and has never been put out.

I Am The Light of the World
Oh Father, up in heaven,
We have wandered far away
From Jesus Christ, Our Savior
Who arose on Easter Day.
And the promise of salvation
That God gave us when Christ died.
We have often vaguely questioned
Even doubted and denied.
We've forgotten why you sent us
Jesus Christ, Your Only Son,
And in arrogance and ignorance-
It's Our Will, not Thine, be done.
Oh, shed thy Light upon us
As Easter dawns this year,
And may we feel the presence
Of the Risen Savior near.
And, God, in thy great wisdom
Lead us in the way that's right,
And may "The Darkness" of this world
Be conquered by "Thy Light"

By: Helen Steiner Rice

Dear God, our Father, Praise You for your great love,

*Thank you for sending Jesus, our Light, Joy, Peace and Savior.
In His Name I pray. Amen*

Orpha Stapleton - 1996

March 16

The Check List

Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Are we Christians? Are we Christ-Like? Let's check ourselves.

Jesus had a humble heart. If He abides in us, pride will never dominate our lives. Jesus had a loving heart. If He dwells within us, hatred and bitterness will never rule us. Jesus had a forgiving and understanding heart. If He lives within us, mercy will temper our relationships with everyone we meet. Jesus had an unselfish heart. If He lives in us, then selfishness will not predominate, but rather service to God and others will come before our own selfish interests.

All of these traits are wonderful, but often hard to achieve. If we had to measure up to all these on our own, it would be impossible. That is why Paul recognized that he could never achieve this heart purity by his own striving.

How do we measure up to being Christ-like?

Oh Jesus, help me to more Christ-like. Help me to put self aside and follow You and Your example. Amen.

Don Perry – 1998

March 17

Let there be light

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. Genesis 1:1-5

Have you ever taken some time to really picture what creation, described in Genesis 1, would have been like? This first day would have been incredible. Darkness – Formlessness – Emptiness. Then God said, “Let there be light.” and there was!

In the middle of all that chaos, God spoke light into existence, and it was good. God didn’t change the formlessness or emptiness, yet the light that illuminated it all was good.

I wonder in the middle of our chaos, struggles and emptiness, do we really just need God to be present and illuminate our lives? The good news is that God has done that, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the light of the world, and the Holy Spirit is who reminds us of what Jesus lived and taught and guides us in the here and now.

God’s light is shining around us, in us and through us in the middle of chaos, creating something new and wonderful.

Creator God, continue to make me a new creation today as your light shines brightly in and through me. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 18

Through the Eyes of a Child

Psalm 19:8: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

I am blessed to be able to spend a lot of time with my great-grandson Tucker. Tucker is 5 going on 16 (He's convinced some days that he's 10, not 5). As do most kids, he loves playing with flashlights. He was playing with one at my place recently and happened to shine the light down the hallway, where it reflected off the mirror in the bedroom. He was amazed and delighted and shared with me about it. He spent several minutes moving the flashlight around and viewing the reflection. One of my responsibilities as a Christian is to make sure I reflect the love (and light) of Jesus for Tucker and all my grandchildren and great grandchildren. I want them to be as amazed and delighted with the love of Jesus as Tucker was with the reflected light.

*Heavenly Father, remind me daily that I am to reflect the love and light of Jesus for those around me. Help me to be worthy of that love.
Amen*

Marsha Heeter

March 19

Find Your Light

What a change. What a difference. You can see it as clear as night and day. After just finishing the book of John and moving into Acts, I read about the great change in the Disciple named Peter. This “full of fear” man during the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is now a bold, courageous man. Having received the Holy Spirit, he is a new student of the word, teaches it and proclaims to all the people. The one who once denied knowing Jesus, not once but three times, is now facing court time and being in jail without batting an eye. Let us never underestimate the Holy Spirit in our lives. It needs to be activated daily through our Bible reading, devotions and prayer. Now, like Peter, we will be able to tell to others the wonderful gift of salvation as he spoke in the following scripture:

Acts 4:12: Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Father in Heaven, help me daily to find ways to be filled with the Holy Spirit to tell and show people Jesus and His light. In Jesus' name. Amen.

John Dodge

March 20 – Third Sunday of Lent

Living Water

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:13-14

Maybe it's COVID. Maybe it's busyness. Maybe it's being overwhelmed. Maybe it's too many challenges and too much chaos. Maybe it's a lot of things at once. Whatever the cause(s), many times the result is that we just feel drained, empty, burned out, and lost.

As Jesus is talking to this woman at the well, He contrasts the well water to the living water that He will and does give to those who ask Him and follow Him. The Living Water we have available to us from Jesus gives us new spiritual life which leads to eternal life. That new spiritual life leads us to a new way of living in the world today.

Just as physical water refreshes the thirsty body (and we need to continue to drink it), the Living Water that Jesus gives doesn't just refresh the soul of the individual, that Water overflows into the community and world around them to bring life.

If you are feeling this way, take some time this week and for the remainder of Lent, to ask Jesus to give you this Living Water. Allow your soul, spirit, and life to be refreshed and renewed and see what difference you will soon see.

God, I'm thirsty for the Water that you give freely. I need to drink deeply and be refreshed in my soul, spirit, and body. I look forward to this Water in my life. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 21

Hand in Hand

Psalm 139:10 Your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

We should never underestimate the hand we hold as we walk our path with Jesus on the journey of life. It is the hand of our spiritual light and the hand of trust. It is the difference between good times and bad times. It is the hand that gives us constant will power to keep going, and His grip will keep us filled with His Holy Spirit. We can use Christ's firm hold so when we see, feel, and even smell trouble that comes, we can cry out to Jesus and His glorious light reaches out to assist us. Grab Jesus' hand now as it reaches out to us. His hand will lead us and hold us.

Dear Heavenly Father, I have difficulties in this life alone. I need your gentle, loving hands.

John Dodge

March 22

The Light Shines in the Darkness

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood (overcome) it. John 1:1-5

The beginning of John's Gospel describes the coming of Jesus in a new way. In the midst of the darkness of the world, Jesus comes into the world. John's description of Jesus as the Light is fitting and helps us to better see who Jesus is for us. It is in the struggles, the sin, the chaos of life, that Jesus and the life Jesus calls us to shines the brightest.

The chorus to the song, "Shine, Jesus, Shine" reminds us that Jesus shines in this world and also sets our hearts on fire to shine and reflect His light into the world.

*Shine, Jesus, shine fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze set our hearts on fire
Flow, river flow flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth Your Word, Lord and let there be light.*

Look for Jesus' light in your life and how you can shine His light into the world today.

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus, the Light in the world to shine and show us the way. Help us today to shine His light to those around us too. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 23

Beautiful Reflection

As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart. Proverbs 27:19



I really enjoy sitting on the bank of a lake or even a stream or river and watching the nature around me. The reflection of the surrounding world on the water is seen more clearly when the water is calm, it calms my soul too. The calm water reflects what surrounds it. I wonder if Solomon had this in mind when he jotted down this proverb.

It is very true that our lives will reflect what is in our heart too. Jesus talked about this as well in Matthew 15.

So what does your reflect? What do your words and actions, attitudes and mindset show what is in your heart? Paul, also, reminds us of the importance of this in his letter to Galatians (and us) 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Take some time to reflect and see what is coming out of your heart through what you are doing and saying. Then ask God to continue to change your heart and your actions and words.

Search me God and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. Show me where my heart and actions and words need to be more Christ-like and lead me in the way of everlasting. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 24

The Image of Christ

Read John 17:20-25

Image is everything in the world today. We have been conditioned to believe completely in what we see on television, computers and in the movies. Our children are enamored by electric gadgets and spend hours in mindless pursuits.

As the Lenten season begins, we as Christians find ourselves dwelling on only one image – that of our Lord's agony as He hung on the Cross. Men throughout history have given their lives for others, but never before or since has the sacrifice been so great or far reaching. This perfect, innocent Lamb of God sacrificed Himself to redeem our sins, and by His wounds we are forever healed. Jesus' life on earth reflected the glory of God our Father and His desire for us to share in that glory.

Jesus has shown us the way, and we have the opportunity to serve Him by reflecting His image in our daily lives. He told us that the greatest commandments were to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul, and to love your neighbor as yourself. We can honor His sacrifice by being living examples of His love for the world.

Heavenly Father, help us to live our lives of faith in a way that will lead others to the foot of the Cross. Amen.

Roxana Neil - 1998

March 25

Look Toward the Light

Never fear the shadows for light is shining somewhere
Look not into the darkness, nor seek the path of despair.

Look for the beams shining through the cloud
Reach up and grasp each for your own, taking a stand, tall
and proud.

Look toward the light, it shines for you. Let it fill your soul
Let it seep deep within and make you again feel whole.

Let the light glow in your eyes as you bid the shadows adieu
For tucked away down in your heart is a radiance awaiting
you.

Jean Sarff

March 26

A Light for All Times

Be a light for others showing them the way
Let them know God cares for them each and every day.

Keep a smile upon your face and a song within your heart
Share with others your daily faith and ne'er from Him
depart.

Let others know the secret of what a smile within can do
And help them also be a light and to the Lord be true.

This light that you must carry can help to ease some load
And save another's empty heart as they go down life's road.
(Matthew 5:16)

Jean Sarff

March 27 – Fourth Sunday of Lent
God Forgives

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:21-24

Have you ever thought that I can't forgive that person for what they have done? Maybe you've even said it out loud. Maybe you think that you can't forgive yourself for something you have done in the past. There are events that happen in our lives that we struggle with when it comes to

forgiving others and ourselves. Forgiveness is hard, especially when the offence is bad.

Although we struggle with forgiveness, God has offered us forgiveness for our failings, our sin, through Jesus. We have received that forgiveness through our faith in Jesus as we all have and continue to fall short of God's plan for our lives.

As we have been forgiven, we are called to forgive those around us who have wronged us. It is hard and we may not forget, yet that is our call to forgive ourselves and others, not letting the past hold us down or stand between us. There is a correlation between the how we are forgiven and how we forgive others.

This week, take some time to reflect on those events and situations in your life where you are struggling with forgiveness and then ask God to empower you to forgive those people as you have been forgiven through Jesus.

Loving God, thank you for your love and forgiveness in my life when I have fallen short of your plan for me. Help me to not just live better, help me to forgive those who have hurt me and restore as possible, those relationships. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 28

Seeing God's Light

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Psalm 36:9

How easy is it to lose sight of the presence and Light of God when we are struggling with our faith, things aren't going well, we're hurting, we're exhausted, etc. Often these things distract us from seeing what God is doing. We lose sight of God's light.

This psalm reminds us that when we are walking in God's light, it is easier to see God's light. Seems obvious yet is sometimes hard to remember. So how do we remember and focus on God's light in our lives. Verses 5-8 give us things to remember and to focus on in those times.

- 5 Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.
- 6 Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.
- 7 How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
- 8 They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from your river of delights.

By remembering God's love, faithfulness, righteousness, protection, and abundance in the past, we can better see

where God is working today. In remembering God's Light, we can better see God's Light now and in the future.

Take time today to remember God's love and what God has done and then you can better see what God is doing today.

Thank you, God, for all you have done in the past and how you have loved us. Help us to see what you are doing today and where you are leading us tomorrow. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 29

Walk in the Light

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:5-7

We have heard the scriptures that talk about the Light of God, God's Word is a Light to our path, Jesus is the Light of the world. These are wonderful images that give us a good idea of who God is to us. Here though, John takes us on the next step in our faith, walking in the Light of God. It is not just enough to be comforted and surrounded by the Light and Love of God, we must walk each day in God's Light and Love.

What does this mean for us today? It means that our actions, our words, our thoughts, what we type, what we portray, our values, our very lives, must be illuminated by the light of Jesus in every way possible. Asking ourselves (even asking a trusted person) where we are and where we are not reflecting or shining the light of Jesus will help us to see areas where we should allow the Holy Spirit to work on each day.

Search me O God and know my heart, test my anxious thoughts and actions. Show me where You need to work on my life and lead me in the way of everlasting. Amen.

Darren Anderson

March 30

Easter Sunrise

Just before the hour of sunrise
On that morning long ago,
Christ arose in glorious triumph
For God ordained it so.

He spoke to friends in the garden
Before He went away
To prove the sweet reality
Of the first Easter Day!

The dim light of the breaking dawn
Reflected on His face,
And it turned that shadowy garden
Into a lovely place.

And still today, on Easter morn,
Though centuries have gone by,
We reverently bow in worship
And lift hearts to sanctify.

In awe we watch the sun's gold beams
As they glide into view,
For they tint the veiled horizon
In rich resplendent hue.

The sun now shines as if inspired
In just the same bright way
That it reflected His dear face
On that glad Easter Day

Donite M. Dyer

Submitted by Christa Dennison - 1996

March 31

Living in the Light

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.

Ephesians 5:8-10

In this letter to the Ephesians (and to the church), Paul is reminding us of where we have come from and where we should be living, in the Light. This is all part of Paul's writing about what our lives look like when we live in darkness (apart from God) vs. what our lives should look like after we come into the Light. In short, our lives in the Light need to show all around us goodness, righteousness and truth, things that please the Lord.

Paul uses here examples about living in the dark (destructive talk, greed, impurity, idolatry, disobedience) contrast with the difference living in the Light looks like in our lives. This transition / transformation is something that happens over time. We move from one area to another throughout our lives, sometimes getting it wrong. Hopefully getting it right more and more often.

Paul even talks about this in his own life in Romans where he says what he wants to do, he doesn't and what he doesn't want to do, he does. He then recognizes that it is Jesus who saves us.

As we go through the season of Lent, allow God to lift you up and continue the transformation and good work that God has started in you.

Thank you, God, for your grace in Jesus. It is your grace and love in our lives that helps me to live in the Light each day and lifts me up when I fall. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 1

Your Light Within

God gave us each a light shining from the soul
He wants us to let it shine, helping us feel whole.

This light helps us find our way when we are sore distressed
It is a present comfort whenever we're depressed.

It helps us find our way when lost – keeping us on our path
Comforting us throughout our lives, calming even our
wrath

Hold your light high above you, shining for all to see
For this light that shines within you will last through
eternity.

Jean Sarff

April 2

Jesus

“Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.” (Philippians 2:9)

J – is for the wondrous joy He gives me

E – is for all eternity

S – is for His wonderful salvation

U – is for us all you see

S – means He is my blessed Savior
who died on calvary

His love to show for you and me.

Put them all together they spell Jesus.

The one who means the world to me.

Jesus is the sweetest name I know.

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you so much for your beloved Son who was crucified for me and my sins. Amen

Beulah Curtis- 1992

April 3 – Fifth Sunday of Lent
We are Conquerors

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:37-39*

A song that we have been singing recently, Breakthrough Miracle Power, speaks of the feelings many of us have throughout our lives of being overwhelmed by life. So often it feels like everything is stacked against us and the world surrounds us. When these things happen, it is easy to become defeated and to give up.

This scripture above and the chorus to the song which says,

Let that breakthrough miracle power pour out
I need a breakthrough miracle moment right now
Only in You and with You, my victory is found
Bring that breakthrough miracle power, let it rain down

Remind us that we are conquerors through Jesus. Nothing separates us from God's love and God's miracle power comes to us to lift us out of the muck and mire that weighs us down. We can overcome the difficulties of life through

the power and love of God that lives within us and flows through us.

This week, reflect on where you are feeling overwhelmed with life – home, work, personal, financial, etc. Then ask God to remind you of God’s love for you that never ends and for that breakthrough miracle power that lifts us up each day.

Loving God, thank you for your love that never ends. A love that lifts us up above the issues of this world to live victoriously in you. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 4

Love Strength and Guidance

Exodus 15:13: In your unfailing love, you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength, you will guide them to your Holy dwelling.

Recently, Jesus reminded me of three important ways to serve Him in my life. The three things I need from Jesus are **Love, Strength** and **Guidance**.

Love: I was reminded that love needs to be the central piece of my life. We can all share how we have shown our love for each other through the years. This love is small compared to the wondrous love Jesus has for us.

Strength: I need strength to serve Jesus. The Bible points out that some followers found strength in fearing Jesus. Not the trembling, terrified fear, but a fear that places our Lord in high honor. Believe in His Value in my life and His great power.

Guidance: I was reminded how a good shepherd cares about his sheep and understands them well. I need Jesus to remove all obstacles in my path and lead me through dark times. I am guided even to the end.

*Father in Heaven, thank you for your **love, strength and guidance** each day we live. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

John Dodge

April 5

Reflecting the Light

For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

When we look in a mirror today, we get a pretty clear reflection of who we are and what we look like. Not so in Paul's time. Their mirrors were polished metal, primarily brass, which will give a distorted image of the viewer. That image is that is seen is incomplete at best.

As believers, as we try to shine and reflect the Light and Love of Jesus, we often will give an incomplete and dim reflection of that Light. Does that mean we shouldn't work

at it? No. When we do give a dim or distorted reflection, we must recognize it and then allow the grace of God through Jesus to lift us up and open us to better shine and reflect the Light of Jesus to the world around us. We keep allowing Jesus' Light to shine through us as the Holy Spirit changes us.

Take some time today to see where Jesus' Light maybe dim or distorted in your life and ask God to forgive you and open you to better shine that Light to the world.

Gracious God, thank you for your grace in our lives. Forgive us when we fail and open us to better shine the Light of Jesus in the world today. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 6

Shining the Light

“No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines its light on you.” Luke 11:33-36

Most of us are familiar with the children's song we learned in Sunday School, "This Little Light of Mine". I'm sure that this scripture is the basis for the song, and it gives us a wonderful lesson, especially as adults.

If we were to hide or cover a light, most times, it is a waste of the light. You don't turn on a lamp in your house and then cover it with an opaque cover. We turn on a light for a specific purpose, to help us see in the dark and depending on the light, to help give people a focal point to give direction or attract attention.

This is a great image that shows what we are to do with the Light of Jesus that is within us. We cannot cover or hide the light of Jesus from those around us. Jesus' light gives us and those around us direction, purpose and shows us the right path to travel. We as believers, are called to shine the Light of Jesus to all people everywhere we go. It is the Light and presence of Jesus in the world today that will make the difference that we need in the world today.

May the Light of Jesus shine through you and I today and each day of our lives.

Loving God, you put the light of Jesus in me, in us. Help us to shine Jesus' light wherever we are today. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 7

Nature Reminds Us of God's Plan

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies”

Easter comes in the spring in this hemisphere. It's a beautiful time of flowers and new life, you can see lambs and calves everywhere. It makes everyone feel more lighthearted and hopeful. After the dreariness and dread of winter, the sunlight, the colors and the freshness are so welcome. In fact, it's a time we really look

forward to.

For Christians the feelings are the same in thinking of the pain of Christ's death on the rough cross followed by the joy and hope of the resurrection. It is because of the resurrection of Christ we can look forward to the joy of being with God and Christ someday. Like nature celebrates the spring, we celebrate the bright hope that is ours because of the gift we have been given by God through His Son Jesus.

Lord, we thank you for the new life given to us each spring and the new life given to us by Your Son, Jesus. Amen

Larry Ely- 1993

April 8
Children of Light

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

These verses remind me of a book that I once read and may read again during Lent "A Peculiar People" by Rodney Clapp. In it, he describes the church, or better yet, the people who believe who are the church, as peculiar or different from the world. This basically means that our lives, our values, our words, and our actions should be different from the world around us because we have been called out of the darkness, the ways of the world, into the light of Jesus.

The way in which Peter describes the people of faith tell us that we have been called by God to declare God's praises through word and deed in the world today.

Do our actions and our words show the people around us that we believe and are praising God with all we are? Lent is a great time to ask ourselves this question and to allow

God to show us where we may fall short so we can allow the mercy we have received to make us more like Jesus.

Merciful God, help me today to live a life that praises You with my words, my deeds, my whole life. Make me more like Jesus. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 9

Walking in Rhythm

Psalm 40:3: and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

I have found my life goes a lot smoother when I have a rhythm to it. This rhythm is not made up of anything big, but little things. For example, when I put my keys, wallet, sunglasses, etc. where they go, I can find them easily. When they are not properly placed and I must take time to find them, my rhythm is disrupted.

When we read our Bible daily, we develop that rhythm. It is a rhythm we look forward to each day. It is a dance, rejoicing and praising. It is a new song we sing daily to our Lord. It is a rhythm that develops respect and trust with every scripture we read. We now realize we are blessed in His salvation provided for us.

Let us all join together to find His wonderful rhythm in our lives.

*Father in Heaven, may we always sing a new song to you every day.
In Jesus' name. Amen.*

John Dodge

April 10 – Palm Sunday

The Palms

John 12:12-13 - The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!"

The people, upon hearing Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, gathered what they had available to offer praise to Jesus for who He is. They may not have fully understood who Jesus was and His ultimate mission and purpose, yet for who they saw Him to be and what they had seen Him do, they offered to Him praise.

Sometimes I have been slow to offer praise and thanksgiving because I haven't had what I thought was proper or even been in the proper place and so I have held back and more often than not, forgotten about it.

Simple branches, some laying down coats, voices lifting up praises. Simple, yet appropriate. Received by Jesus in the spirit and heart that they were lifted up and shared.

I hope and pray that each day we will offer up the praises and thanksgivings to God with what we have and who we are. May our hearts and spirits recognize the blessings and

presence of God around us and may our praises and thanksgivings be offered freely and often.

Giving God, we do offer our praises and thanksgivings to You for who you are and Your love for us. We give them with an open heart and spirit today. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 11

Witnessing to and Reflecting the Light

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. John 1:6-8

Several years ago, I was awakened in the middle of the night. My first thought was that I was late for the day because of how bright it was outside. I soon realized that it still was the middle of the night even though it looked like the day. I got out of bed and looked out the window to see our yard covered in a thick layer of freshly fallen snow. It was also a night with a full moon and clear skies. The moon reflecting the sun, the snow reflecting the light from the moon lit up the night with a light almost as bright as full sun.

This image has been with me for many years as it reminds me of our part in shining the light of Jesus in our world today. It is not our light that shines, as the moon and the snow do not have a light of their own, it is Jesus' light that shines through us and reflects off of us. Because we reflect and shine the light that is Jesus, the darkness that is around us is pushed back and Jesus' light is present in our communities. We do this through following Jesus commands to Love God and to Love our Neighbors.

Gracious God, we thank you for the light that is in our lives. Help us to reflect and share the light of Jesus to our communities and people around us. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 12

Strange Ideas

Acts 17:20: You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.

I am very fascinated and encouraged as I read through the book of Acts. I can cling to every word as I learn the events of Paul's ministry. I smile when I read that what Paul preaches is 'strange to the ears' for some, but they do not stay away and want to hear more (Acts 17:20). My heart is glad when I read that Titius Justus, a worshipper of God, along with Crispus, the synagogue ruler and his entire

household, who were baptized with many others (Acts 18:7). I got great encouragement when I read of Appolos, a man who reads the scriptures and has thorough knowledge of them (Acts 18:24).

As I continue reading of Paul's journey of preaching Christ, I eagerly anticipate what lies next (Acts 17:11). Not only for Paul's journey, but for my own. Each day I learn how to find Jesus in my life.

Father in Heaven, keep us craving your word so we can learn more about you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

John Dodge

April 13

Light Pushing Back Our Fear

The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

Fear is something that can affect every area of our lives. It can prohibit us from taking the next step, Fear can stop us from taking that risk. Fear can stop our very lives because we either have a lot of unknowns or we build up on our heads and hearts the worst that can happen, and we feel safer if we just don't move forward.

In this Psalm, David picks up a theme that stretches through out scripture and the stories of the People of God. We look around us and we are afraid of the world and what might happen and so we don't move. Frederick Buechner

says “Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.” (Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith)

Each of the Biblical writers, Jesus and countless others have encouraged us to trust in God above all things of this world. It is living in the Light of God, in making the Lord the stronghold of our lives, where we truly find strength and the right path each day.

When there's uncertainty, God's light in Jesus will show the way and we don't have to be afraid.

Strong God, May you guide me though the ups and downs of this day, showing me through Your Light, that in the midst of everything happening, I don't have to be afraid. Amen.

Darren Anderson

April 14

You're in Perfect Hands

Read John 10:27-28

As the slogan goes, "You're in Good Hands with allstate." Insurance-wise that may be true, but assurance-wise with God. "You're in All Loving Hands." No matter how many times we stumble and may be tempted, no one, not even Satan himself can remove us from the loving, protective hands of a loving and caring God. We have the blessed hope and assurance that we are more firmly rooted in His hands than anything this world has ever seen. We can live our lives without thought for tomorrow as we follow the Light of the world in His footsteps. We take our eyes off Jesus from time to time and stumble, but when we cry Abba Father, He hears, picks us up, forgives and assures us He is beside us on our life's road. Thanks to the cross, we won't get what we deserve- justice. We will get what we don't deserve- mercy.

I thank God, that when He sees me, He sees through the blood of Jesus. It's that way for all who call Jesus Lord. I thank Him and praise Him for His many blessings to me.

Jesus died a crucial death, not for what He did, but for what we did. It's His perfect love that enables us to live a life of service to Him and to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. Praise the Lord for His grace and mercy. We can forget the past, not worry about the future, but live for Him in the present. It's His Gift to us. Let's share it with all we meet.

Our most gracious Lord, Thank you for your love and sacrifice so we can be made worthy to be in your presence. Help us to be a beacon of your light in a dark and sinful world. In Jesus' perfect name. Amen.

Larry Rosen-2002

April 15

Praise God for His Great Gift

Ephesians 1:3, 5: How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by Jesus Christ.

Do you realize that God planned all of this world for man, whom He created in His likeness? Knowing man would sin, God planned the way to redeem us. How? By Jesus – Son of God, Son of Man, the only Son of God, like no other.

Because he was Son of God, Jesus knew what His life on earth was to be – all of his living as a Son of Man, born of woman. The human experience as a member of a family, His years of ministry and teaching. There were those who loved Him and became friends and disciples as well as those who rejected and condemned Him.

He knew the Son of Man would be brutally scourged and nailed to a cross. As Son of Man, His pain would be excruciating. At Gethsemane, God's Son bowed to His Father's will and bore that agony for me and all mankind.

The glorious result is a Risen Jesus, our Lord, who sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for you and me. His

Redeemed. When we accept His gift of life and become that born again person, the very presence of Jesus lives in us? He is with us always, everywhere.

Thank you, my Lord and my God, for life eternal and life of goodness and beauty here on earth. Amen.

Hazel McQuown

April 16

The Empty Tomb

I was there . . . in the Garden of Gethsemane
And I went into the rock hewed room
Words cannot describe the awe that was felt
As I viewed the empty tomb.

I stood silently and gazed with awe
In that sacred, holy place
And reflected once again on His suffering
As I recalled His saving grace.

The importance of that empty tomb
Was once again made real
And I drew much closer to my Lord –
His presence I could feel.

He has risen and is alive –
The Empty Tomb took away my breath
And I knew for certain that He was Lord
As I reflected on His death.

Jean Sarff

April 17 – Easter Sunday

Jesus Has Risen

Matthew 28:1-10

After many dark nights and living in the dark night of the soul, the women went to the tomb early in the morning. Some gospels say they went to anoint the body of Jesus with more spices. Most likely they primarily went to grieve following the Sabbath day. What they expected is not what they found!

Met by an angel, accompanied by an earthquake, the women received the news that Jesus was not there, He has risen from the dead and they would see him in Galilee! Their grief turned to joy, although they did not have all the answers, they knew that there was something different happening in their midst. Then, met by Jesus standing before them, they experienced His presence in a completely new and profound way.

In each case, they were told, “Do not be afraid.”

In the midst of our fear, sorrow, uncertainty, loneliness, brokenness, in the midst of the struggles of life, we are unexpectedly met by Jesus and our whole world changes when we recognize Jesus with us. Our fear dissipates, hope is reborn, chains of unforgiveness and hardness fall away and joy begins to return to our souls.

We too, come to the tomb this morning, knowing that it will be empty because we know the story, but the cry of “He is Risen!” is no less strong and powerful for us. We have journeyed the days of Lent, we have experienced the

darkness of the garden and the cross, we have faced the struggles within our hearts and lives and now can come and hear the words spoken to us, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” Let us put aside all that hinders us and pick up joyful worship, today and each day to come!

HE IS RISEN!!

Father, we know that you meet us in the places of our lives where we least expect it and change us where we are. Let us know the joy of the resurrection today and each day as we strive to live in the joy of Jesus' resurrection and the new life we have with Him. Amen.

Darren Anderson