



*“From Fear to Faith”*

2023 Lenten Devotional

Dallas First Christian Church  
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February 22

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*

Darren Anderson

February 23

Fear Not

*Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

About fifty years ago the local fire department came to visit all of the homes in our area and had us put a sticker in the window of a bedroom where a child slept. We put the sticker on our toddler, Stephanie's, room, and it made us feel safe to think that in case of fire, she would be rescued. Shortly after that she was crying every night when we put her to bed. "No, No!" , she would say, "Fireman!" We finally figured out what was wrong. She had heard us all talking and thought that at night when she was asleep a "fireman" would come and get her. I took a good look at the sticker and it showed a picture of a Fireman in a bulky coat and helmet carrying a small child. We tried to explain to her that it was only in case the house caught fire, but she couldn't be convinced. Finally we scraped the sticker off of her window and I silently prayed that a fire wouldn't come near her room.

Our fears are often irrational and don't make sense to other people, but to us, they are very real! It is comforting to know that when fear grabs hold of us we can pray and trust our Father God to watch over us. Often the things we fear are as innocent as a "fireman's sticker" on a child's window, but to a frightened person, the fear is powerful! The promise in Isaiah says "I will strengthen you, Yes I will help you. I will uphold you!"

*Help us, Heavenly Father, to trust in your promises and let our fearfulness be replaced by faith in you. You are "a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." (Psalm 46:1) Amen*

Audrey Cameron

February 24

Ask, Seek, Knock

Prayer is asking and receiving  
It's talking with God every day  
It's living a life He'd be proud of  
And walking with Him all the way.

Prayer is seeking and finding  
Seeking His will in all that you do  
It's telling Him what your need is  
And waiting for His answer for you.

Prayer is knocking and opening –  
Knocking 'til God opens the door  
It's having faith that God can move mountains  
And believing in him evermore.

So, ask, seek and knock and be faithful in prayer  
Ready to tell Him your need  
God can perform the greatest miracles  
If only to Him we will plead.

Jean Sarff

February 25

Out of Fear

*"And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, "This man was also with Him." But he denied Him, saying, Woman I do not know Him" (Luke 22:57)*

Poor Peter! He had bragged at the last supper that he would go anywhere with Jesus, even die for him. Now that Jesus had been arrested and brought to the High Priest's house, Peter was following "at a distance." When Peter was boasting of his faithfulness to Jesus, his Master had told him "before the rooster crows, Peter, you will deny Me three times." After three times being accused of being one of Jesus' followers, Peter still said he was not. As the rooster crowed, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. What a sad moment that must have been. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Poor Peter indeed. He was scared to death. Fear had taken such a grip on him that he was acting completely out of character. Happily, this is not the end of Peter's story. After Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, he told Mary, (who was the first to see him after he rose from the dead) "Tell my disciples, and PETER, that he is going before you into Galilee." (Mark 16:7) The Lord knew Peter's heart. Fear had overtaken him but he would redeem himself many times over in the years of his ministry ahead.

As you travel throughout Europe there is a great deal of statuary depicting the disciples and Jesus. You can always identify Peter, because there is always a rooster by his side. It seems so unfair to see that rooster, when you know Jesus forgave him.

As our lives unfold there are many instances where we have acted irrationally out of fear. Unlike the sculptors' depiction of Peter, our "roosters" are gone. Our Savior paid the price for our

sins and forgives us as we come to him penitently, asking for forgiveness. Our fear can turn to faith in Jesus. Like Peter, we can spend our lives atoning for past mistakes and following a path that leads to eternal life. I wake up each morning to a rooster crowing. As Easter approaches I will use that reminder of the rooster crowing for Peter to stay close to my God and trust in His watchcare over me.

*Heavenly Father, forgive our sins and draw us close to you as we approach this Holy Week in our church. Keep us from allowing fear to overtake us and keep us from experiencing the abundant life you have planned for us as your faithful followers. Amen*

Audrey Cameron

February 26

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 often times is equated with fear and can bring on or cause us to fear. It can be a physical darkness – a dark night, a dark house; it can be a dark time we are going through – following a loss or heartache; it can be darkness of our inner being – caused by depression, anxiety and the like; it can also be an emotional or spiritual darkness brought on by fear, uncertainty, sin, etc. We all face these times in our life. We may think we're in the light, yet

eventually we have to face the truth that we are really 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.

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

February 27

Mountains of Faith

*Matthew 17: 1. After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.*

While driving down highway 99 on a clear day I enjoy seeing the snow-covered mountains. We can thank God for placing them there for us. They show us how beautiful mountains are and how powerful God is. These mountains remind me of the talks God has had with Jesus, Peter, John, Moses and Elijah. We should also include our names with them. As followers of Christ (or should I say hikers) we should never leave these mountains. Celebrate each

day of answered prayer, showing people Jesus in our lives, witnessing a baptism and on and on.

Great to have Jesus in control of our mountains of faith.

*Father, Let us celebrate our mountains together by listening to your beautiful voice. In Jesus name, Amen*

John Dodge

February 28

Openness of Faith

*Mark 5:32-34: But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."*

This woman exhibited both faith and fear.

She worked her way through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus' robe, believing she would be healed.

She was fearful that she had been caught and was going to be in trouble with Jesus.

She moved back to faith when she told Jesus the whole story.

The result was healing through her faith.

I think that fear can close us off from the world in a way that can further take us down a dark path. I wonder what would have happened if this woman had held to her fear and blended into the crowd and went home.



Her faith allowed honesty and transparency before Jesus. She knew she couldn't hide anything from Jesus (or it might ruin her), and because of Jesus' love and welcome, she was able to be healed.

Let your faith overcome your fears. Let your faith encourage and develop honesty with Jesus and yourself and see what Jesus will do in your life.

*Loving God, Thank you for knowing me and loving me for who I am. Develop within me a faith that overcomes my fear and draws me closer to you and what you are doing in my life. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 1

Knowledge Replaces Fear

*2 Timothy 1:7. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

Through the years I have had jobs that required me to learn Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). I can recall one particular year this training had a theme; Knowledge replaces Fear. Knowing what to do will take away our fears if someone needs our help.

Christ gives us two important ways to remove fears in our lives, Love and Faith. We are not alone in this world to battle our fear. How do we enroll into a Love and Faith, free from fear, resuscitation class? We have a manual to read daily, and our Church will provide classes each Sunday on this topic. Each day and week our love and faith need to be resuscitated.

The spiritual life you save, will be your own.

*Father in heaven. Together we will learn love and faith each day. In Jesus name, amen.*

John Dodge

March 2

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

March 3

Calling on God

"I'm calling on the God of David, who made the shepherd boy courageous" I can hear my 9 year old son, Noah, singing this song now. This song has been my turn around song. Do you ever get a song that you know you need to sit with that song and do some major worship to? This song and Brandon Lake's "Gratitude" oh it just moves something in my heart and soul. These past years have been hard. Anyone else feeling that? The pandemic has left me worn out, depleted, and full of anxiety and fear. I have felt like I was left in the dark and lost. I would lay in bed and think "I have a house now, what if \_\_\_\_\_?" I have a family now, what if \_\_\_\_\_?" "I have some health concerns, what if \_\_\_\_\_?" "I have to boys that need me, what if I \_\_\_\_\_?" I would lay in bed and not sleep and spin out. I was stuck on this horrible train of thought every night when it got dark and I was alone with my thoughts. Something had to change.

Scott (my husband) and I work on Sundays so you haven't seen our family in church in about 5 years. Scott introduced me to Elevation, a church in Charlotte NC, in December 2021. During

the year in 2022, the pastor shared "Weariness leads to weakness if not interrupted by worship." I heard this loud and clear in my heart, my soul and my head!! It was like a light started to shine in my darkness. I sat with the song that I mentioned "Same God" and a transformation happened. I gave it all in worship to my Savior. I poured out my heart to my maker. I felt God holding my frail frame and in the song it says I am calling on the Holy Spirit and I breathed in and out and let the Spirit fill me. When the song ended I felt light. I felt joy. I felt God's presence.

I can't explain all the ways that the Lord works but I know when I come to my heavenly father, I know he will answer. I am learning that the cure to my fear and anxiety is intimacy with the Lord. I'm finding that when my thoughts are focused on him, there isn't room for all the other garbage talk in my mind. At night when I start to feel the anxious thoughts coming, I am able to redirect them. I will put headphones in and listen to scriptures, a sermon, or praise and worship songs. I also have some verses memorized that I can say as well...

*2Timothy 1:7, For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

*Matthew 11:29-30, Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*1Peter 5:7, Cast all anxiety on the Lord because he cares for you.*

*Lord, you have promised life and life abundant. Fear and anxiety are not from you. Lord as we call out to you in the darkness, we know you hear our voice and you are calling us back into the light. Help us to surrender and move in faith that you have got us. Thank you for caring for us and taking away our*

*fears. You are the light of the world, our Savior and the lover of our souls.  
Thank you for preparing our hearts today for Easter. In your Name, Amen.*

Amy Winokur

March 4

Strength for the Day

The day dawns cold and dreary  
    And dark clouds fill the sky  
I know I must keep moving  
    And somehow try to get by  
*“He has promised me strength for the day”*

Many times it seems so hard  
    To struggle through the day  
Sometimes it takes all my courage  
    To cope when the skies are gray.  
*“He has promised me strength for the day”*

And then the sun shines through the clouds  
    I feel my strength coming back  
And I remembered once again  
    My faith was all I did lack.  
*“He gave me strength for the day.”*

Jean Sarff

March 5

## 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 it 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 obedience in word, deed, and thought, 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 6

## Perfect Love Casts out Fear

*"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us." (1 John 4:17)*

My fear on the road began at an early age. A young girl who attended our church needed a ride home from a young people's event. My father, being the pastor, offered to drive her home, having no idea at the moment where she lived. My sisters and I happily jumped in the car to ride along, and off we went up into a central Oregon canyon and up into the "rimrock hills." The road back in the early 1940's was in very poor condition. Continuous rock slides and terrible weather had caused crumbling road beds and falling rocks. The road at one point curved around an outcropping of rock and looking down a sheer cliff., it seemed like a bottomless pit below. The road narrowed to one lane, and since my father couldn't see if another car was approaching us, he stopped the car. "You kids walk along the inside of the road, he commanded us. When I get around the corner you can come back in the car." We could hear our daddy praying out loud for the Lord's help. He got the car around the bend and we walked slowly and carefully along the canyon wall, touching it with our hands. Finally we came to the girl's farm and with a sigh of relief my dad was able to turn the car around and start back down home. All of my sisters and I remember that harrowing experience of driving a girl home from church. I don't think my dad ever offered to drive her home again!

I have heard horrible stories of people who drove that road and didn't come out as well as we did. I would like to claim that my dad's prayers for safety were answered.

When we are in fearful situations it is so gratifying to feel God's love and watchcare over us. That is when faith comes in. We can believe that he is a "very present help in time of trouble."

*Heavenly Father, what peace we can have in the most fearful situation, knowing that you are caring for us. Keep those we love in your care today. Help us to trust in you. Amen*

Audrey Cameron

March 7

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 8

Peace

I've heard that the birthmark of a Christian is a bullseye.

*1 Peter 5:8-11 says "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, he will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."*

When I read this I saw something I hadn't seen before...the devil is LIKE a lion. He is NOT a lion.

I have been reading the book of John in my quiet time. I read this morning in John 14, that Jesus knew his time is coming, when he is going to have to endure the beatings, the mocking and ultimately death on the cross. He is telling the disciples that his time is coming to an end and he will be returning to the Father. He says he is sharing this so they will believe him . He also promises that his Father will leave with them another counselor, the Holy Spirit (vs 15). And that the prince of the world has no power over him because Jesus belongs to the Father (vs 30).

You also belong to the Father. You do not need to live in fear because you are not helpless. Jesus has been referred to as the Lion of Judah. And we have that lion on our side. We have the power to resist the devil and stand firm in faith. You have been equipped with the Holy Spirit. And we know that Jesus left us his Name, his Power and his Blood, so we can stand up against the schemes of the devil, our flesh and the world. I don't know about you but this gets my warrior side fired up!

At the end of the chapter in verse 27 Jesus says "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

*God, this world is hard and each one of us has a target on us. There are things we fight against that we can't see. But thank you for giving us your one and only Son who provides a way for us to stand firm and resist the dark kingdom. Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit and your peace. WHAT A GIFT! Thank you for the promise that you make us strong, firm and steadfast. To you be the power forever and ever. Amen.*

Amy Winokur

March 9

### 3 Important Steps to Move From Fear to Faith

By the time I was 21 years old, I had suffered a lifetime of disappointments. Both of my parents were dead, as well as all my grandparents, and most of my aunts and uncles. I had seen more death than most do in a lifetime. I was pregnant multiple times outside of marriage, which carries its own shame and embarrassment. I had been homeless, lived on government assistance, and struggled to put food on the table as a single mom. I had already parented alone for several years and had no way of knowing that I would go on to parent even more years alone. And all of those things shaped me and molded me with fear.

But the journey I embarked upon a few years back was far worse than I could have even imagined. Eight years ago, I decided to walk away from Corporate America and accept this call on my life to minister to single moms nationally. I was scared and felt ill-equipped, but I did it anyway. And the ministry quickly grew. Before long, our ministry was ministering to thousands around the globe, but for every success I experienced in ministry, there was an even bigger attack personally.

First, my husband lost his job and there was no money. Then, my children were plagued with countless unforeseen surgeries and there was even less money. Eight surgeries later, our family was pressed from every side financially. And then there were the difficult teen years, where I failed miserably in parenting. And the times I secretly wanted to quit ministry altogether, because I didn't feel I measured up. It was during this difficult time that I actually declined every invitation I received from churches to speak. The

enemy had accomplished exactly what he wanted. He had taken my voice.

Fear had beaten me down and strangled the life from me. It was gradual and I usually masked it well. But most days, I spent my time crying uncontrollably. That's what fear does. It strangles, immobilizes, subtracts, withers, crushes, and shatters. It grips our soul and snatches every dream. What once was the joy of the Lord somehow becomes replaced with anger and hopelessness. Fear encourages us to give up and accept the misery of existence versus the excitement of a God-led pursuit.

Many Christians are struggling with fear and allowing it to take our voice and strangle us – secretly and slowly. Yet, our Father in Heaven paid for us to have an abundant life, free from fear and worry and anxiety.

There are 3 important steps that we can take that will allow us to master fear and move into the freedom Christ paid for us to have.

### 1. Acknowledge what fear is.

If fear didn't come from the Lord, then who gave it to us? As Christians, we must understand that fear was given to us by Satan as a mere tactic to keep us distracted and off course for the plans the Lord has for us. We must understand it for what it is, then realize we have the authority to dispel fear with the power of Christ's shed blood.

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and sound mind. 1 Timothy 1:7*

### 2. Seek God until he takes away our fears.

Keep pursuing freedom from fear, even when everything around you seems scary and hopeless and endless. Keep asking God to deliver you from the fear that is being forced upon you.

*Keep on asking and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking and you will find. Keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will open. Matthew 7:7-8*

### 3. Speak truth.

Speak truth over your fear, even when you don't feel like, even when it seems impossible, and even when it's the hardest thing you've ever done. When Moses died, I am sure that Joshua was afraid of what God was now calling him to do in the book of Joshua. I am sure he had no idea of how he would lead the Israelites. He never expected to be in that situation. Do you find yourself in an unexpected situation today? Are you fearful of your future? Your kids choices? Your finances? Your marriage? Your singleness? God's word promises you victory, authority, and strength. No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you. Joshua 1:5

Don't clamor in a corner like one with no hope. You are a daughter of the King of Kings. You are more than a conqueror in Christ. That challenge, that thing you are facing, is not bigger than your God. He will never leave you. When fear comes for you, don't retreat and allow it to strangle you. Get ready for war. Wage war against the evil one who has attempted to lie to you and steal the joy God has paid for you to have. Take authority and stand against it.

[Jennifer Maggio](#)

## The Life of a Single Mom

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March 10

Going Under

*Luke 8:24-25: The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."*

The disciples, many of them fishermen and used to the Sea of Galilee, thought they were going to drown in the midst of the storm. I can't imagine the fear they felt and how helpless they were against the wind and waves that were taking them down. Yet Jesus slept.

Often the pressures of life and the things and situations that come against us, threaten to overwhelm us and we feel like we're going under. We wonder where God and Jesus maybe in the midst of things. We don't feel their presence, hear their voice, or know

their peace and protection. “Where are you, Lord?” we cry out. We expect things to go easy and smoothly, yet we want them on our terms and our time.

Jesus often responds in a similar way with us as with the disciples, “Where is your faith?”

The things of life can distract us from our faith and faithful living. We begin to see things the way the world sees them and expect them to be dealt with the way the world would deal with them.

Yet Jesus reminds us to be faithful in our actions and beliefs, to continue to cry out and pray about the situation and to receive what He gives to us, even if it is completely different from what we expect. Our faithful actions will lift us up above the situations of life in ways that we may not even imagine.

*Sustaining God, Thank you for your continuing presence with me in the storms of life. Help me not to lose sight of you and to keep living faithfully in your love. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 11

The Promise

*Read Romans 8:38, 39*

We are not promised an easy life. There are no guaranties or wealth or comfort in this world. We have only to look around us on a Sunday morning to see that even the life of the best of us Is

filled with difficulties. If suffering was a part of the life of god's Saints, why should it not be a part of our lives?

As Paul recounted the many ordeals which were a part of his life's mission, he did not complain. He was grateful for the opportunity to serve the Master. The message with which he was entrusted was worth the stoning, the imprisonments and the shipwreck. He was far more concerned with the favor he had received from the Master than the difficulties he endured.

Paul had seen the cross and he understood just how much our Savior loved him. He knew also that he was never alone, for the Lord accompanied him through all of the struggles of his life, just as we must know that He accompanies us as we carry our own crosses.

*Lord, show us the path you would have us walk. Help us as we need Your assistance. Strengthen us as we need strength, and let us effectively carry Your message. Help us, Lord, to be all that You would have us be. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Irv Blake (written for 2001 Lenten Devotional)

March 12

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 throughout 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

March 13

Have Fear But Don't Be Afraid

*The fear of the Lord leads to life . . . Proverbs 19:23a*

We are to honor and respect God or "fear" Him, but many people are afraid of Him because they haven't accepted Him. One

excuse people give for not coming to Him is that they can't see how He could want them since they have done too many wrong things. That's not true of course. That's not true, of course. Then there are those that choose not to accept Him because they are afraid that He will take away the "fun" in life, but you have to give up nothing when you come to Christ. He will more than gladly clean you up from the inside out and remove whatever stands in your way of serving Him. All you need to do is to come and surrender your life to the Lord and He will do the rest. The great part is that He will change you and give you new desires, like the desire to get involved in a Bible study, a desire to serve, and change you to be like Him. We were created in His image. It doesn't mean in looks, but it does mean in the Lord giving you the characteristics of a child of His like the fruits of the Spirit.

We are all missionaries. We may not be called to go overseas to serve, but we are called to all go into our corner of the world and serve and most of us that would be our jobs, neighborhoods and families.

One thing I know, and that is that God never touches anyone's life and leaves it the same. He created us to serve and worship Him.

*Father, we thank You for Your many blessings. We surrender our lives to You. Use us as You will. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.*

Larry Rosen (written for 2009 Lenten Devotional)

March 14

## Ministering to Others

*Exodus 34:39 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with two tablets in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.*

Even if you wanted to you could not wipe the radiance off of Moses face. This was placed on his face after he spoke with God.

He did not see God, if he did he would surely die. What he was allowed to see was the back of God's head and His hand, yet Moses face was filled with a glorious bright light. Exodus 33: 21-22. His face brought fear to all who saw it, so he wore a veil around them and removed it when he spoke to God,

How about the light that shines on our face when we minister to others? Can they see an unveiled face in us? We need to always be aware of the radiant impact we have on others.

*Dear Lord, let us always shine, glow and be your light when we speak to others. In Jesus name, amen.*

John Dodge

March 15

## God is Present and Helping in Times of Fear

*Isaiah 41:10, 13: 10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

*13 For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.*

The people that Isaiah is speaking a word from the Lord to, are people who feel totally lost, weak, and oppressed by their conquerors. They had been conquered by a foreign nation and many had been sent into exile. Some thought that God had abandoned the people and they were on their own.

These words are part of God reminding and reassuring God's people that they weren't alone and abandoned.

This is a reminder to us as well. Here, and throughout scripture, we are reminded that we are never alone in life. God's love and presence is always with us; there is nothing that happens to us, or we can do to be separated from God's love. We are also not alone in that we are a part of the church, the Body of Christ. We are a part of this Body and not only receive comfort and presence, because we are a part of the Body, we also give to others and lift them up. Each one of us is important to the others in the Body and are necessary in different gifts that we have and are called to share.

God is always with us, and we are never alone.

*Present God, Today, please remind me of Your presence and love today. Help me too, to share Your presence and love with those around me each day. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 16

## 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.

We may not understand or even know where and how the Light of Jesus will lead us from darkness and fear, yet each step we take in faith, each action that shows love to our neighbors and those we may consider enemies moves us further into the Light and a better understand of what God is doing in our lives and those around us.

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 17

## Strength Comes Back

When it seems like failures overcome you  
And trouble weighs down your back  
It's time to remember we have a Savior  
Who'll give us whatever we lack.

He knows about suffering and misery  
'cause He trod to our very same drum –  
He'll take all our mistakes and failures –  
Giving us strength to overcome.

He'll turn setbacks into comebacks  
He'll stand by our side all the way  
He'll help us recover our balance  
And guide us every day.

He'll carry us when we cannot walk  
And have decisions so hard to make  
Giving us strength to help us come back  
And heal our every ache.

Jean Sarff

March 18

## The Great Commission

*"Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' "* (Matthew 14:27)

What a sad story we read concerning the disciples forsaking Jesus after his betrayal and arrest in Gethsemane. Matthew 14:50 tells us "Then they all forsook Him and fled." It was a frightening scene for sure. Peter had boldly stepped up and cut off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest. Jesus healed it immediately and told Peter to put his sword away. John's account says a "detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him." Fear gripped all of the disciples and all but Peter ran away.

Peter followed Jesus and stood outside in the courtyard while Jesus was being questioned. It was there that Peter was accused by others of being one of Jesus' followers. After the third denial, and hearing the rooster crow (as Jesus had predicted), "Peter went out and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62)

Fear had taken over all of Jesus' disciples. When you picture what was taking place it is hard to judge them.

This terrible fear was even worse as the scene at the cross unfolded and reading the four gospels it appears that only John was with Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the cross.

After he arose from the dead, Jesus visited the disciples in Jerusalem. The account reads "when the doors were shut", so the disciples must have still been afraid. Jesus tells them "Peace be with you." Then the disciples were commissioned to go out and preach. Their fear had now turned to faith!

Jesus told them: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

*Heavenly Father, help us, like the disciples of old, to turn our fear into faith. Let us be faithful in spreading your gospel to others. Amen*

Audrey Cameron

March 19

The Lord is My Strength

*Habakkuk 3:19: The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.*

The book of Habakkuk in the Old Testament is essentially a conversation between the prophet Habakkuk and God about what is happening to God's people and when God is going to act to restore them. This last verse of the book, 3:19, is one that sums up Habakkuk's response and what should be the response of the people, including you and I.

Often, when faced with hard, life situations, we will resort to trying to handle things on our own power and strength. This often times may make things worse and cause our fear and uncertainty to grow in strength.

Habakkuk declares that the Lord is his strength in the midst of all the uncertainty and chaos that was going on around him and



with God's people. Can we do the same and declare and live out that the Lord is our Strength? I hope so!

*Mighty God, be my strength today in the midst of life, plant my feet on sold rock and empower me to be who you have called me to be. Strengthen our church as well as we move forward in life and ministry. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 20

Spirit of Power and Love

*"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)*

I recently took a "sentimental journey" back to Moro, Oregon, a place where I lived when I was two to seven years old. My father was the pastor of the only church in town and with seven children under the age of 15, five of us with bright red hair, we made an impact on that community. As I looked at the church we attended I remembered a story about the steeple. It was still standing and looked tall and "steep." The church was being repainted and no one would volunteer to paint the steeple. My father was a strong man, physically, having played football in high school and becoming a "black belt" wrestler at Oregon State University during his college days. In fact, my preacher father was the coach for the Moro High School six man football team which had won acclaim at the state finals!

Always having a "spirit of power and of love" (I wouldn't say the wisdom employed in this undertaking) my Dad volunteered to paint the steeple of the church.

I don't think my mother let us watch this undertaking because I can't remember seeing Daddy up so high against the sky, but I do remember the happy congregation rejoicing in the newly painted church and the beautiful sparkling white steeple.

The outcome was not too good. My father didn't fall off the roof, but unfortunately he was painting with lead paint and developed lead poisoning which kept him "lying low" for a few weeks. I proudly took a picture of the Moro church to share with my siblings and I am sure we were all happy to see the steeple, undoubtedly repainted, but sparkling in the sunshine. My father was an outspoken champion of His Savior and I could picture him up there painting away and asking for the Lord's help. On ascending he would have given a shout of joy and praised the Lord for a safe job well done.

May each of us approach those tasks laid out before us with the same "spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind."

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the great examples of faith shown to us by those Christian warriors who have come before us. Give us that empowerment that only comes from you. Amen*

Audrey Cameron

March 21

One Truth

*I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fear.  
Psalm 34:4*

We live in a troubled world filled with confused people who struggle to find meaning in their lives. They search every day for ways to feel better about themselves and their place in the world. But I think that most everyone eventually discovers: There is no amount of money. There is no degree of fame. There is no perfect job, or family, or life. There is no magic pill or “how-to” book. There is only one truth.

Without God, there is no purpose to life. The struggles and victories, the pain and the joy, mean nothing in the end if you don't believe in something beyond yourself. God gives meaning to life. When the time comes for you to lift the veil between life and death, there will be something beautiful waiting for you on the other side. When God gave us His Son, he gave us a heavenly purpose and the ability to reach for something beyond ourselves. Because of God, we see the miracle in every sunrise.

When we turn to God in times of pain and uncertainty, we discover time and time again that there is no greater comfort than God's love. We can go to Him and He is always there. Just as He has always been.

Happy Easter.

*Father, Thank You for giving meaning to our lives. May we always remember to turn to You for comfort and direction. Amen.*

Lisa Austin (Written for 2009 Lenten Devotional)

March 22

## My Heavenly Shepherd

*Psalm 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me."*

At the base of all our fears, probably the fear of our death, or someone we love's death are what scares us the most. Most of us have experienced the death of someone we love. Losing our parents is the worst thing we can imagine as a child. When you lose a sibling, or a spouse it is terrible. To lose a child or grandchild is an unspeakable grief. How do we ever recover from the fear of and the experience of losing someone we love. I cannot imagine going through "the valley of the shadow of death" without the "Good Shepherd" beside me. The imagery of Psalm 23 is that of a Shepherd with his sheep.

Having raised sheep for almost fifty years, I have learned a great deal about a sheep's dependence on the shepherd. If I did not lock in my lambs at night, they would disappear overnight at the hands of the wild things that live in the woods surrounding my farm. Although I am careful to get my sheep in the barn every night, I still lose a lamb or two every year. A trapper who came and walked my fence line told me "You have everything: Cougars, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, possums", and he listed several others. I feed my sheep, I shear my sheep, I trim their hooves, I help them give birth to lambs, and I do love them!

When I think of my Heavenly Shepherd watching over me, he cares for me even more earnestly than I care for my flock of sheep. I can "walk through the valley of the shadow of death", knowing

My Shepherd is walking beside me. I love the phrasing in this Psalm. It doesn't say we are walking through "death" but through the "valley of the shadow" of death. That "valley" and that "shadow" are quite removed from death itself. The Psalm also says "I will fear no evil." We do not need to feel fear in the face of death, our own or of those we love. Our Shepherd is with us. The Psalm ends with "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

We can say with the Apostle Paul "O Death, where is your sting, O grave, where is your victory" We need not fear death. It is not the end of life.

*Heavenly Father, you are our "good shepherd." Lead us through this life and as we experience the "Valley of the Shadow of Death" in our lives and those we love, we know you are beside us, comforting us. Guide us as we travel through the days you give us. Amen*

Audrey Cameron

March 23

Strength is Found in Faith

*Isaiah 35:1-4a: 1 The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. 3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come . . ."*

Winter can often be a hard time for people, shorter, darker days, cold temps, etc. and they look forward to the spring season with the new life that sprouts from the ground when the rains come. Isaiah describes not the winter to spring transition, but the transition of a dry and parched desert into a beautiful landscape full of blossoms, splendor and blooms. He then goes further to talk about the opportunity for transformation of people who are weak, fearful, and alone because the Lord is coming.

To me, the Lenten season can be that time of transformation. We can be experiencing times of weakness and fear and we are reminded that God is coming, God is present, God is alive!

We have to not just believe that with our heads, we have to live it through our hearts and our actions. Are we willing to let God strengthen us, to renew us, to bring growth to us? Are we willing to participate in the process as individuals AND as the church? Strengthening, Renewing, and Growing all require us to participate and to be willing to go where we may not have gone before.

We leave the desert behind for the glories of God in a new reality.

*Glorious God, Today I invite you to continue to change me, my life and our church. You are present and you are moving in our lives to strengthen us and remove our fear of what is ahead. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 24

## They Shall Bear You Up

*Psalm 91:11 "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways, In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone."*

Leaving home for college, driving off after a visit to my parents' home with small children in the car, whenever I was leaving, my father would stand beside my car and say a prayer over me and give me that verse to carry me away. Looking back on those occasions I am sure he had reason to fear over me. I always seemed to have accidents with my cars or be in someone else's car when they had a wreck. Remarkably, I have survived a number of harrowing accidents from rolling a VW bus, landing in a small river, and hitting a deer. In every instance I felt a presence of angels, protecting me from great harm. When the deer flew through the air and was heading toward me in front of my face I looked out the windshield and cried out "Oh Jesus, help me!" Then I told the poor deer how sorry I was to have struck her. Although my car was totaled later, I drove away from the poor deer and enjoyed a shuttle trip to Portland Opera.

I suppose someone could say, "Well, those were just lucky breaks." I don't think so. I do believe in the power of prayer, and I know our Heavenly Father sends angels to watch over us. My Father was a prayer "warrior", praying over his eight children and then his grandchildren, even before they were born. When we have experienced a miraculous recovery from a bad situation, we often say, "We used another of Grandpa's prayers." We need to pray for those we love in this same way. I have over 100 people now in my

immediate family, and it is a joy to fall asleep, not counting sheep, but praying for these precious souls the Lord has given to me. I saw a recent cartoon that showed a child falling asleep and someone telling him "Don't count the sheep, pray to the Shepherd." Good advice!

We have a choice. We can fall asleep trembling in fear over those we love in harrowing situations, or we can pray for them and entrust them to a loving Heavenly Father, knowing that He watches over them. Claim Psalm 91:11 in your life. Turn your fears into faith. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him I will trust." (Psalm 91:1, 2)

*Heavenly Father, watch over those we love today and give us peace as we know you are faithful to protect us from evil. Give Your angels charge over them and keep them in all their ways. Draw us near to you and change our fears to faith in you. Amen*

Audrey Cameron



March 25

## Shadows of Life

*“Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I will fear no evil for you are with me. “ (Psalm 23:4)*

There cannot be shadows without darkness and light  
Valleys and mountains are life's days and night.

Fear and trust dwell side by side  
Darkness hides where faith does abide.

Shadows pass when we give God control  
Darkness leaves with light as our goal.

God walks with us in shadowy places  
Holding our hand with His loving graces.

Jean Sarff

March 26

## God Knows Us Better Than We Know Ourselves

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

Psalm 139 is a psalm that speaks of how much and the many different ways in which God knows us and loves us. For some, this can be frightening because we try to hide so much from each other and also God. The psalmist sings of God knowing when we sit and rise and where we go, knows our words before they are on our tongue, saw us and formed us in the womb. This intimate knowledge that God has for each of us can be a bit disconcerting, but it doesn't have to be.

God knows us better than we know ourselves and because God know us, God loves us unconditionally. God walks with us through the good and the bad times of life, carries us when we need carrying, challenges us to grow and shows us the way to walk each day.

When we remember that God loves us unconditionally and there's nothing we can do to escape that love, we can trust God and we can invite God to search us, test us and lead us to where we are supposed to be.

*Loving God, thank you for knowing me, loving me, and walking with me. Remind me of Your presence today and show me the way to go. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 27

The Clown

*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10*

When I think about fear, I immediately think about my experience recently where I was being chased by a clown in a haunted house. It sounds made up, but it is not. The thing that scared me the most about this experience was not the freakishly looking make-up the clown was wearing, or that he was waiting for me to come into the room. No, what put fear in me the most, was that not one of my “friends” helped me during this nightmare come true. They stood there and laughed at me. They still laugh at me, every time they recall the event. It still makes my heart race and my palms sweat when I think about it.

Besides the chasing clown, the biggest fear I have is being separated from Jesus and spending eternity in hell. For about four months now, a line from a song has been stuck in my head. The line says, “Perfect love is casting out fear. . .” I have been thinking about this line frequently. During this time of year as we prepare for Easter, this line has significant importance to me. Jesus, who’s perfect and sinless, died a sinner’s death so that I can have eternal life with Him. He is Love.

So no matter what’s waiting for me in life, a clown or laughing friends, I know that I have been saved and have been freed from death.

*Lord, Thank you for protecting me and being by my side in all I do. Amen.*

Amy Dodge Winokur (written for 2009 Lenten Devotional)

March 28

I See You

*Psalm 139:1-6ff: You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*

If you are a fan of the Avatar movies, you will be familiar with the line “I see you”. I soon realized that when they said this, it was so much more than just I notice you but more along the lines that they truly see who they are, they see into the soul of the other person and care for and love them.

This psalm is a reminder that God truly sees us – when we sit and rise, before a word is on our tongue, always present – and that can be a wonderful feeling and reality for us, even if it is hard to understand. We are known, accepted, and loved by God completely and unconditionally! What a wonderful reality for us!

I wonder too, is this a call or an example for us, you and I, to “SEE” each other in this way? How much are we called to know, accept and love all those around us? We can’t do it to the full extent that God does for all of us, yet it is a bar for us to reach for and stretch ourselves to grow towards. It can take work, vulnerability, grace, and patience yet as we do, we build the relationships that we need to in the world today.

Today, I encourage you to “SEE” your neighbor, family member, friend, or even pre-friend, in a deeper and more complete way.

*God, thank you for knowing me completely. That fact is a wonderful reality for me. Help me today and each day, to better “SEE” those around me and show them Your love and presence too. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

March 29

Jesus is Love

*And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13*

God’s gift to mankind is Jesus. THEN, NOW, and FOREVER.

For all of us, Jesus was and is LOVE, FAITH, and HOPE. He gives us guidance and compassion, teaches us about forgiving and receiving forgiveness. **His Gift** from the cross is the opportunity to have Eternal Life in God’s family. Jesus loved us so much, He was willing to die a horrible death on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven.

SALVATION is our choice.

Let’s hang our sins on the cross and Be Alive with Jesus! Keep Him in your heart and let the Holy Spirit Guide you.

*Thank You, God, for giving us Jesus and for helping us learn to share your Love. We pray in Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

Lee Bird (written for 2001 Lenten Devotional)

March 30

Faith, A Soft Pillow

You need a place to lay your head  
    When your world is upside down  
A pillow of comfort to console  
    When you feel like you might drown.

When worry shatters your peace of life  
    No matter what you do  
Faith is holding out its hand  
    Ready to see you through.

Hope is a gift given by faith  
    A reckoning sent from above  
Hold out your hand and accept this gift  
    For it's the message of love.

Faith puts things back together  
    When shadows fill the soul  
This soft pillow of faith and hope  
    Will help to make you whole.

Jean Sarff

March 31

Hope

The Easter season is a time of hope. There still is fear, there still is a painful awareness of sinfulness, but there also is light breaking through. Something new is happening, something that goes beyond the changing moods of our life. We can be joyful or sad, optimistic or pessimistic, tranquil or angry, but the solid stream of God's presence moves deeper than the small waves of our minds and hearts. Easter brings the awareness that God is present even when his presence is not directly noticed. Easter brings the good news that, although things seem to get worse in the world, the Evil One has already been overcome. Easter allows us to affirm that although God seems very distant and although we remain preoccupied with many little things, our Lord walks with us on the road and keeps explaining the Scriptures to us. Thus there are many rays of hope casting their light on our way through life.

Henri Nouwen

Fear will usually lead us to hopelessness.

Easter, the Resurrection, brings us Hope. Things may not be perfect, yet we know that Jesus' new life and our new life with Him, brings us hope for the new future we share together. We have hope that God's love is always present, that we are accepted and being made into new creations, that God's grace lifts us up when we fall and we are always welcome in God's presence.

May we know Hope above fear, and may that Hope draw us closer to God and strengthen our faith that we will be the People of God in our world today.

*Thank you for new and renewed hope through the resurrection of Jesus. Help us to live into that hope and share it with others in the world today. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

April 1

Every Moment of Every Day

*Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and help you. I will uplift you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10*

Isaiah foretold the coming of the Lord in his prophecies. In this verse he gives assurance that the coming Lord would watch over His people. Our Lord and Savior has been with us, strengthened us, and come to our assistance so often that it is not easy to see the results of His efforts.

When I needed His help, He was there for me. Today I live, dependent upon His support. As I say this, let me also say that His help never fails. He never takes a day off. A cry brings Him on the run. God is not a man, that He gets tired. Neither is He a son of a man, that He should take a day off, or go on vacation.

He watches over us every moment of every day, sees us in our weakness, and observes our short comings. Yet even as we fail Him, He grants us His grace and forgiveness. Even before we admit our errors. There is no one like our God in all the earth.

*O Lord, we give you our love and our gratitude, knowing that we can never begin to repay Your many blessings. Please use us in Your service. Let us serve You, Your kingdom, and Your people. Amen.*

Irv Blake (written for 2005 Lenten Devotional)



April 2

## 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 3

## Do Not Be Afraid

*Joshua 1:9* | *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*

I'm pretty sure that everyone has experienced fear. I can remember being afraid of crossing a wooden bridge over a creek that was on the way to my Aunt and Uncle's house which was out in the woods. I was certain that it would collapse under the weight of the car. I felt that fear again when I was fresh out of high school, living in Portland, working a job at a manufacturing plant on Macadam Avenue. I was living with my grandmother on SE 50<sup>th</sup> Street and rode the bus to and from work. To get to the closest bus stop, I had to walk a ways on the Ross Island Bridge. As bad as being in a car was crossing that little bridge, being a pedestrian on the busy Ross Island Bridge was even scarier. After I became a driver and encountered more and more bridges, I learned to deal with them. Watching the news reports on the bridge that collapsed during the 1989 earthquake in San Francisco reactivated the fear. However, I have since then, successfully driven across many bridges in that area. For me, the secret is to be a center lane, if I can, and to pray continuously until I'm safely across.

Having faith can help overcome fear. God loves us and wants us to do well. Trust that God is with you wherever you go.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for being there to help us overcome fear and to make it through the difficult times we encounter. Thank You for the many blessings you give us and for watching over us. Amen.*

Marsha Heeter

April 4

Not Alone

I cannot walk alone, dear Lord,  
without the touch of Your hand.  
My legs are weak and I'm afraid  
But I know You understand.

When I reach out for You, dear Lord,  
I always find You there.  
And You will renew my strength  
When I come to You in prayer.  
You've given me many blessings, Lord,  
Including a heart that sings.  
And as I walk in Your shadow  
I am safe beneath Your wings.

In my distress I cried, dear Lord,  
And I know You heard my plea.  
You said, "Dear child, take My hand,"  
And, "Fear not but come unto Me."

I know I need not fear, dear Lord,  
For You call me by my name.  
You'll walk with me all the way  
And help me to not complain.

Gladys Adkins

*For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Isaiah 41:13*

April 5

## Fear in Grief

*John 20:19-20: On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

Grief is our reaction to loss. It is part of the process that we go through in moving toward a new normal with new possibilities. This is most often associated with the loss of a loved one, yet can also happen when we lose other things in life – relationships, jobs, important physical things, etc.

The grieving process can easily blind us to many things in life, including where God is in our lives.

Following Jesus' death, the disciples were fearful of the Jewish leaders and had forgotten what Jesus had promised about rising from the dead. Grief is natural and necessary for us yet does not need to block our faith and recognition of God's presence with us.

We can be drawn towards God and a deeper faith instead of walking away. Remember the imagery from David in Psalm 23:4

Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure. (The Message)

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (New International Version)

May the times of grief and mourning not create fear and doubt but draw us closer to God and God's peace.

*God of all Peace, may you reveal yourself to us in the mist of our fear and to those who are grieving. We pray for your peace and protection and your healing of our hearts. Amen.*

Darren Anderson

April 6

For Those Tears I Died

*Matthew 11:28 (NIV) Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

The chorus from the hymn, "For Those Tears I died":  
And Jesus said, "Come to the water, stand by my side,  
I know you are thirsty, you won't be denied.  
I felt every teardrop, when in darkness you cried.  
And, I strove to remind you, That for those tears I died."

This was one of my favorite hymns growing up here in the church, and I still find myself humming it from time to time. The idea that Jesus felt every teardrop as I stumbled my way through my adolescent and teenage years marveled me. When I was heartbroken and turned to our dog to cry into his fur, Jesus was there. As I got older and my heart was broken and I cried into my pillow, Jesus was there. Later in my adult life when my marriage broke up and I cried at the failure of it. Jesus was there. When I lost my Dad and I didn't think it was fair and didn't want life to continue as if nothing had changed, Jesus was there. As I raise my teenage boys into young men and things don't go as I would have planned, Jesus is there. Sometimes life seems so very hard, and the

struggle makes us so very weary. God knows that, Jesus hears our crying.

A more modern song that touches my heart in a similar fashion is the praise song

All Who are Thirsty, all who are thirsty  
All who are weak, come to the fountain  
Dip your heart in the stream of life  
Let the pain and the sorrow be washed away  
In the waves of His mercy  
As deep cries out to deep (we sing)  
Come Lord Jesus come . . .

*John 14:27 (NIRV) I leave my peace with you. I give my peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid.*

*Lord, let us open our hearts to You that we may feel the love and comfort that You offer. We want to experience the feeling of you wrapping us in your loving arms and bringing us closer to you. Let us not be too proud to ask for your help and turn to you when we are overwhelmed. Amen.*

Lori Engichy

April 7

Up from the Grave

*Let not your heart be troubled. You are trusting God, now trust in me. John 14:1*

*Read also: Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 15:35-36, Matthew 28:18-20.*

DEATH. . . not a subject we like to talk about or even contemplate, still, there can be no resurrection without some form of it.

The song, “Mountain of God” by Third Day, expresses it this way: “I must go through the valley to stand upon the mountain of God . . .” We have a ‘history’. This history seems to lock us on a path. The end result is always death. Many times, we do good things, even great things. We can be a great parent, friend, spouse and Christian. We might also have experienced a number of the opposite images. This happens to all of us. To say that we aren’t encumbered by both would say that Christ’s death was insignificant and unnecessary to us. It is in the valleys that our personal strength is depleted, thus making it possible to see the strong hand of God lifting and carrying our lifeless spirits. The question of “why?” is one that is already answered by God down through the ages. The answer is: to preserve our freedom and enable us to choose the right way. Most of our lives are cluttered with “things” that eclipse the truth. This is the truth. We can only receive ‘life’ by giving our life to God, for God and in God. Our strength is frail at best. Only trust in God’s power, strength and love will bring us resurrection.

“Do not be afraid . . .” “I will be with you always even to the end of the ages.” Think upon these words of our Christ. In the valley or on the mountain, these words will bring us hope.

*Father in Heaven, Your nature is life. We long for life. Guide us gently so that our nature would be taken over by Yours. Thank You for loving us. Amen.*

Gary Ivey (Written for 2007 Lenten Devotional)

April 8

From Fear to Faith

*In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Ephesians 6:16*

Fear leads to anxiety

Faith gives peace

Fear leads to feeling lost

Faith shows the way

Fear leads to doubt

Faith gives you trust

Fear leads to feeling insecure

Faith gives confidence

Fear leads to weakness

Faith gives strength

Fear leads to helplessness

Faith gives guidance

*Father I pray that my faith would grow and fear would not have power over me. Thank you for sending your son. For his life, death and resurrection. Amen.*

Coni Bell



April 9

## 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, hopes 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

April 10

Breakfast by the Sea

*"After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias." John 21:1*

A wonderful story that follows Jesus' resurrection is the breakfast with the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus had gone away after appearing several times to the disciples. Peter said, "I am going fishing" and the other disciples went with him into the boat. That night they caught no fish. Then a voice called from the shore, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him "No." Then Jesus told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, and the net was so full they could hardly draw it in. Peter realized that it was Jesus. You can't help but love Peter for what he did next. He "plunged into the sea" to go see Jesus.

After the net full of fish was dragged ashore the disciples saw a fire of coals and fish laid upon it, and bread. Jesus took the bread and fish and gave it to them, and they realized who He was.

Then Jesus restored Peter: Three times Peter had denied Him. Three times Jesus asked, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Three times Peter answered, "You know I love you." Jesus then told Peter to "Feed my sheep."

Peter's fear at the arrest of Jesus and the crucifixion was gone. His faith was restored. Jesus told him "Follow Me."

Jesus also spoke about Peter's death. He said Peter would "stretch out his hands and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."

Then Peter knew that he too would be crucified. Scripture tells us that Peter did not feel worthy to die as his Savior had, instead he asked to be crucified upside down.

The breakfast Jesus served his disciples by the sea is a beautiful picture of the loving way he cared for them. Their lack of faith was forgiven, they would go on to carry the gospel throughout the world.

*Heavenly Father, like the disciples by the sea, we feel your care over us every day of our lives. Help us to overcome our fears and act out of a deep faith in You. Amen*

Audrey Cameron