

# LENT: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

## Week #2: February 27-March 4

Monday, February 27

Today's Devotional comes from Champ Thornton

**Theme: The Anointing**

**Scripture: Psalm 2 and Mark 14:1-11**

Psalm 2:1–12 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup>“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

<sup>4</sup>He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

<sup>5</sup>Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, <sup>6</sup>“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

<sup>7</sup>I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

<sup>8</sup>Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. <sup>9</sup>You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

<sup>10</sup>Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. <sup>11</sup>Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. <sup>12</sup>Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Mark 14:1–11 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, <sup>2</sup>for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

<sup>3</sup>And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. <sup>4</sup>There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? <sup>5</sup>For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus said, “**Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup>For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. <sup>9</sup>And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.**”

<sup>10</sup>Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. <sup>11</sup>And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

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**Reflection:** When I face a day that seems out of control, too often I just want order. I want tasks I can actually accomplish. I want a car that will dependably run. I want people who will just follow my plans. I want all of life to go according to my agenda. Then I could breathe easy, and life would be manageable and good. Yet almost every day, something feels out of control and swirling toward suffering. My instinct is to remove the chaos, to ask Jesus to fix the problems, to restore order, to avoid the pain. Yet here's what I've learned: sometimes Jesus keeps us in the middle of out-of-control situations precisely to show us that we really aren't in control. Instead, he wants us to trust him, even in hardship, that he is always King, unceasingly ruling over all things for our good.

In both passages for today—Psalm 2 and Mark 14:1-11—we see people who think that maintaining their own authority is the way to happiness. In Psalm 2, the nations of the world see God's anointed King—the descendant of King David—and feel that their own reigns and plans for the good life are in jeopardy. They're threatened by this rival Ruler who claims sovereignty over even their realms. So what do they do? They fight. They resist his rule, they cast off his authority. But it doesn't lead to the good life, but to destruction. Yet if they had only submitted to this King, even their service to his authority could be full of joy. In fact, their submission turns out to look remarkably like protection and safety—"blessed are all those who take refuge in him."

And in Mark 14:1-11, another set of people is threatened by God's anointed King. It's not pagan nations (as in Psalm 2); it's the leaders of God's own people. The scribes and lead priests, after Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple in the previous chapter, begin plotting to kill Jesus. They want to be in charge. They want the security of their temple jobs. They crave the prestige of sacred leadership. They cling to a steady income. Yet in all his authority, Jesus hasn't come to crush them. When the woman anoints Jesus's head with ointment worth about a year's income, she's preparing him not for battle, but for burial. If this king is planning on dying, what kind of threat can he be? (And it's this news that feels threatening to one of Jesus's own disciples, Judas.) So, both the religious leaders and Judas, like the nations in Psalm 2, seek to eliminate whatever seems to threaten their view of the good life.

And for us, it's no different. Jesus will not permit us to build our own little kingdoms of self-importance or security. He will not allow us to seek to control everything around us. But he's not come to take away our happiness. Instead, in his grace, this King causes us to feel pain, to feel the limits of our control. Why? So we stop trying to rule as little kings of our own lives. Because when we take refuge under his good rule, we find that he's not trying to crush us, not trying to take our lives. Instead, this anointed King gave up his own life. When we submit to his gracious reign, He rescues us out of our kingdoms of darkness and death, and welcomes us into his kingdom of light and life.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us acknowledge your kingship over all things—even over our own daily plans and lifelong hopes. You are the great and awesome King! Help us submit to your good authority even today. Amen.

# LENT: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

**Tuesday, February 28**

**Today's Devotional comes from Robin Woodworth**

**Theme: Abide**

**Scripture: John 15:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

**Reflection:** What a great God to give me "Abide" for my Lenten devotional topic. This past year has been marked by the Vinedresser masterfully cutting some of my branches and pruning others. One morning I sat myself down in the conservatory at Longwood Gardens to work on this devotion. Abby, (a horticulturalist from a topiary garden over an hour away) sat on a chair in the same alcove to read her book by GK Chesterton. We eyed one another, Abby speaking first, asking me what I was doing. We quickly realized God had brought us together to encourage one another in our faith and He had also beautifully provided an expert to explain pruning to me! How to look at the plant, find the dead leaves and branches, removing them to give the healthy branches room for light, air and water to flow. Lastly, prune the good branches so they can produce more fruit. Jesus uses this example to teach how God, the vinedresser shapes and forms us to do what we were created to do for His kingdom.

In verse 3, Jesus reminds us we are already part of the vine since we have heard and believed Him, the Word. Then He commands us to abide in Him and He will abide in us. Abiding is active while resting. As I was being pruned, I was reminded to stop trying so hard and to relax and come fully into God's presence and reside, remain, dwell... abide in Him, allowing His Spirit to flow into me. More importantly, "practicing the presence" must be a day-by-day act of obedience. God has given me peace and a plan moving forward, using all those painful cuts to get myself out of the way and draw me into the relationship meant to give me life with and through Him.

**Abide:** Take several minutes to sit quietly and allow yourself to be fully present with God. Take a deep breath and relax completely in His presence.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to decrease focus on myself, and bring to mind someone who I can serve in the week ahead. Prune away anything that would keep me away from abiding in you. Amen

# LENT: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

**Wednesday, March 1**

**Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Terry Foester**

**Theme: Surrender**

**Scripture: Romans 12:1-2**

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

**Reflection:** A sacrifice is something consecrated and offered to God. The Apostle Paul urges us to offer our bodies as “a living sacrifice.” He is saying, let your entire life be consecrated and offered to God for His purpose.

When we think of offering our lives to Jesus, it can be intimidating. It's easy to focus on all that we need to give up and what it will cost us to live this way. The idea of “a living sacrifice” beckons us to call to mind one of the most difficult passages in the Bible. The time God asked Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, as a living sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-19). If we fix our eyes on the cost of the sacrifice, it's difficult to make sense of the story. But in the midst of Abraham's faith, God provided a sacrifice to take Isaac's place on the altar.

In our lives, God has already provided a sacrifice once and for all, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we lay down our lives as a living sacrifice, we are not being asked to earn our salvation. Instead, we are being invited into something beautiful: a life of worship.

The part I want you to meditate on this morning is the first part of the challenge: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy...”

Let's pause right here, in view of God's mercy. Can you zoom out a little, and allow your life to be seen through God's mercy? We can never underestimate the merciful eyes of God. He sees us, not as our sins deserve, but through the lens of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. It's from this perspective that we offer all of our lives to God, not as an act to earn favor, but as a response of worship.

**Pause for Reflection:** In view of God's mercy, spend time coming before God bringing all of your attention to him.

**Prayer:** Father, how can I offer my body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to you? Help me to stop conforming to the pattern of this world, but transform me by the renewing of my mind. I appeal to your merciful view. Thank you for receiving my life, my will and all my activities as an offering of praise to you. Give me courage to speak up on your behalf today, as your vessel. Amen.



# LENT: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

**Thursday, March 2**

**Today's Devotional comes from Kim Biasatto**

**Theme: Perseverance**

**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 (NLT)**

Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings. Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

**Reflection:** Last year as I was cleaning some things out of my attic, I came across a box of trophies, ribbons, and medals. Everything from maroon swim team "Participation Ribbons" to ridiculously large wrestling trophies. They had been up there for years, gathering dust in a cardboard box.

I called my kids and asked if they wanted their valuables. Not surprisingly, all four said no. Now what was I supposed to do? Each award held a memory for me. A moment in time when I got to watch one of my children compete for a prize. The thought of throwing them away was so difficult, but it was not like I could give them away. Who would want a trophy with someone else's name on it? But what good were they doing in my attic?

Reading 1 Corinthians 9 caused me to reflect upon the amount of time I have spent working, competing and striving for an earthly award that eventually does nothing more than gather dust. Yes, I was running to win the prize, but so many times I was running after the wrong thing. I was settling for a maroon participation ribbon instead of a crown. I wanted others to see my enormous golden bobble instead of my seeing others who needed Christ.

In this season of Lent, I pray that each of us runs with purpose. And yet as we run, we remember to pause to make sure we are running in the right direction. That God opens our eyes to those around us. To those we can witness to. To those we can serve, help, encourage and befriend. Let us discipline ourselves to be led by the Spirit and then run to win!

**Prayer:** Lord God, as I run through my days remind me to pause. Help me to look up and be led by you. Open my eyes so that when I look around, I will see those who need you. Let me run the race well and with purpose, bringing honor and glory to your name. Amen

# LENT: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

**Friday, March 3**

**Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Nate Keeler**

**Theme: Boldness**

**Scripture: John 3:34-36a (NLT)**

<sup>34</sup> For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. <sup>35</sup> The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. <sup>36</sup> And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life.

**Reflection:** One of my biggest pet peeves is leaving a restaurant still hungry. Maybe it's just me, but if I'm going to pay a premium for a dining experience, I'd better not have to come home and eat a bowl of cereal! Some restaurants are just too stingy with their portions.

When it came to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, the Father was not stingy. John tells us that he put everything in Jesus' hands. I take this to mean that Jesus had the full authority of God on Earth to accomplish his messianic ministry. In verse 34, John says that the Father also gave the Son "the Spirit without limit." The idea here is that Jesus had all the fullness of the Spirit's ministry. Jesus, in emptying himself of his divinity (Philippians 2), relied fully on the power of the Spirit for messianic ministry. Jesus was given the Spirit without limit in order to serve, heal and preach with all boldness and energy.

When Jesus commissioned his disciples for ministry and prepared them for his ascension, he imbued them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). It was through the power of the Spirit that the apostles and the first century disciples turned the world upside down for Christ as they ministered and spoke boldly for the Lord.

Do we realize we have been given the same Holy Spirit? While the Spirit's work and ministry may not always look the same for us today, one thing is clear: the Spirit is not stingy in giving us boldness when we ask for it. He seeks to empower us with boldness to share our faith, to stand up for Biblical values and to be courageous in our demonstration of our faith. Consider this week whom God may be calling you to minister to with the Spirit's boldness.

**Prayer:** Holy Spirit, I confess my fear, weakness and discomfort in sharing my faith. Fill me with your boldness without limit today. Help me to have eyes to see how you want me to demonstrate and declare the gospel to those you put in my path. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# LENT: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

**Saturday, March 4**

**Today's Devotional comes from Kristi Pullig**

**Theme: Family/Friendship**

**Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-17a**

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

**Reflection:** I love to pray for my friends and family. I like to write down people's prayer requests and pray for them. Some days I wish I had unlimited time to pray for all of the requests of people I know. Paul talks about a way to pray for the family of God that is focused on who God is – the Trinity. What if this is the way we pray for each other?

Recently I heard a speaker ask the question, "Do we even know what we have (in Jesus)?" I have found myself going back to those words over and over again. Do I even know what I have? Paul's prayer for other believers reminds us what we have in Christ. We have the power of the Father who created the universe, and he is the King of all Kings. We have the Holy Spirit who gives us power and inner strength. This power is not something we can muster up on our own. It comes from the Spirit which enables and strengthens our faith.

Paul also speaks about that faith. He says that through faith, Christ may dwell in our hearts. The New Living Testament phrases it as "Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him." When Christ lives in our heart there are two implications. First, we know we have the presence of God with us. Second, Christ dwelling in our heart leads to transformation. What a powerful prayer! I will be praying this prayer for myself, and I hope that you will join me in praying this for our church family.

**Prayer:** *(If possible, get into a kneeling posture for prayer as Paul did).* Dear Father, I fall to my knees and pray for my brothers and sisters of Brandywine Valley Church. Empower them in the strength of the Spirit. Empower me in the same way. May Jesus Christ make his home in our hearts as we trust in you. Transform me to be more like you. May you increase as I decrease. May I abide in you today. Amen.