

The Times We Keep

2024 Lent Devotional Guide

SMU Student
Affairs

Office of the Chaplain
and Religious Life



Welcome

2024 Lent Devotional Guide

The Office of the Chaplain & Religious Life at SMU is excited to provide the 2024 Lent Devotional Guide to the SMU community. For Christians across the world, Lent is a season of reflection and confession that ends in the celebration of Easter. It provides an opportunity to pause, to repent, to pray, and to worship together in community. As we enter this sacred season of the year, we hope this guide will be a reflective tool for the SMU community.

Given the wide range of Christian traditions found at SMU, this guide is meant to be a collective expression of a shared faith. You will find daily devotionals written by students, staff, and faculty from across the university, representing a variety of Christian traditions. Allow their words to guide you in prayer and reflection over the next several weeks. Regardless of where you find yourself in this season, we hope you find words that both encourage and challenge you.

This guide is an ecumenical collaboration from across the university. No one viewpoint is meant to be representative of all Christians or traditions. Instead, we hope it is representative of the wide story that God is telling amongst our communities. If you have questions or want to get connected with a specific community on campus, please reach out to chaplain@smu.edu.

Using the Guide

This guide contains daily devotionals around our theme for the year: The Time We Keep. Together, we will explore different passages of scripture and reflect on our ideas of time amidst our often hurried and filled daily lives. How do we spend our time? How does time shape how we think about ourselves and others? In what ways is God calling us to a different way of living? As Lent is a season of confession and reflection, join us as we confess and reflect on the ways we misuse and distort our “time.”

The guide is broken up into 7 weeks. At the beginning of each week, we introduce a scripture passage of the week along with a specific theme. Each devotional for a week will reflect on this theme. Each devotional will close with a prayer for the week. While the guide is broken down into specific days and themes, there is no prescribed way to use it. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in prayer and reflection this season of Lent and allow this guide to be a simple tool along the way.

Grace and peace to all during Lent 2024. It is Time to begin.

Week One: Refocused Time

Passage of the Week: Luke 10:38-42

(38) As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. (39) She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. (40) But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

(41) "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, (42) but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

We begin our journey through Lent with this story of Martha and Mary, one distracted with responsibilities and the other focused at the feet of Jesus. Like Martha, we live day to day in the midst of all our responsibilities, and we often lose sight of the call to focus on Christ. Even more like Martha, we can become distracted from Christ by the responsibilities we feel towards our spiritual lives. Beyond the endless items of our "to-do" lists, the season of Lent invites us to remember Christ's work, to model Jesus's sacrifice, and to reflect on our spiritual journeys. What is the "work" that is distracting you from your spiritual life? How do you need to shift your focus as we enter this season? Join us as we pause, reflect, and refocus together.

Prayer of the Week:

Lord, we confess that we live distracted lives. We are worried and upset by many things. Yet, you remind us that few things are needed. Help us to choose what is better. And when distraction inevitably takes hold again, keep calling, "Martha, Martha." Amen.

Wednesday, February 14th

No matter what season of life we find ourselves in, we fight distraction. When there are multiple things vying for our attention at any given moment, we have to choose to give our time to what really matters. One of the reasons that I enjoy the story of Mary and Martha so much is that I relate to Martha deeply. It was so easy for Martha to get caught up in her work and view Mary as being unhelpful. This story shows us not only a very realistic image of sibling relationships, but also holds a mirror to the ways in which we deem those around us to be less than productive.

The gift of the Lenten season is that we are called to reevaluate our priorities. Jesus tells Martha that what Mary has chosen will not be taken away from her. The work that we currently have in front of us is temporary, but investing in our own spiritual lives leads us to be better builders of the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Devotion starts where distraction ends. When we truly devote our attention to what really matters, we are better for ourselves and those around us. Maybe you're just coming off a retreat high. Or maybe you have not spent intentional time with God in months. Maybe you're trying to navigate what faith looks like in a new season of life. Wherever we find ourselves, we can rest in the fact that God will meet us right where we are. This Lenten season, may we not find ourselves as Martha did, overwhelmed by our never-ending to-do lists, but may we take on the spirit of Mary, taking a posture of humility and allowing Christ to be the center of our attention.

*Madelyn Dixon
Perkins Class of 2025*

Lord, we confess that we live distracted lives. We are worried and upset by many things. Yet, you remind us that few things are needed. Help us to choose what is better. And when distraction inevitably takes hold again, keep calling, "Martha, Martha." Amen.

Thursday, February 15th

Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for prioritizing our desire to sit with you. We believe that when we invite you to come into our lives and hearts Your response is always immediate, and we are assured of finding you and learning of you. Amen.

Before we arrive at the house of Mary and Martha in the text, we find that Jesus had responded to and interacted with several desperate individuals in the preceding chapters. The neglected man in the graveyard bound with chains, the synagogue ruler seeking help for his gravely sick daughter, the hopeless woman with the issue of blood, the stranded and hungry multitude, and His powerless disciples. We see a fully present and attentive Jesus engaged in the needs of those who beckoned for His attention. After, Jesus accepted the invitation of Martha and Mary and entered their house. Martha is found to be distracted and busy with the details of preparations even after Jesus had arrived. Whereas Mary turned away from her tasks and was found to be satisfied with sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening, and learning of His words. Two different responses to the arrival and availability of Jesus in their house.

Two questions may be asked, are we ready to sit with Jesus when He accepts our invitation to come into our house? Metaphorically speaking for us, “the house” translates to being our lives or our hearts. Will we turn away from the numerous distractions and “many things” clamoring for our attention and choose “the one thing”, which is to sit with Jesus and learn more about Him? Like Mary and Martha, throughout our serving, we too may face the same conflicting decisions of tending to tasks or sitting with Jesus. Jesus’ response, to Martha’s request to chide Mary because of the choice she made to sit at His feet, encourages us that it is ok for us to turn our attention to Him. For, as Jesus highlighted while there are “many things” taking place in our lives only “one thing” requires our attention. The value and the reasoning of deciding to choose “the one thing” is made clear in Matthew 11:28, for it beautifully states “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden. . .”, and He will give us rest.

Setting aside time to read biblical promises and passages about Jesus’ gentle interactions of grace and mercy can serve as a way of sitting with Him to hear His word despite the “many things” of today. Our invitations to Jesus are high on His priority list for He does want to come in and sit with us.

Closing Prayer

We are thankful Jesus that You are always available and accessible through Your word, we thank you for only asking of us “one thing”, to sit with You, and learn of You. We wait for You today in Jesus’ name. Amen.

*Carolyn Douglas
Faculty Administrative Assistant
Perkins School of Theology*

Lord, we confess that we live distracted lives. We are worried and upset by many things. Yet, you remind us that few things are needed. Help us to choose what is better. And when distraction inevitably takes hold again, keep calling, “Martha, Martha.” Amen.

Friday, February 16th

‘Martha, Martha, you are distracted by many things...’

I have reflected on the story of Martha and Mary so many times throughout my life. As a person who lives with a heightened sense of responsibility, I relate to Martha’s struggle as she fulfills her obligations with a twinge of jealousy towards others who are able to unplug and relax. As a leader, wife, and mother, I feel responsible for caring for those around me and meeting their needs—often at the expense of my own. I read in a reflection on this passage where the issue was not that Martha was wrong in executing the various tasks, but rather that she was uncentered—allowing the anxiety and distractions to pull her away from the connection with Jesus. I too notice that when I become uncentered, my prayers turn towards a litany of requests and demands of the Lord rather than a true connection and dialogue with Him. Jesus isn’t calling us to stop working. Even our work can be a prayer and pleasing to Him. He isn’t indicating that a contemplative life is more holy than a life full of activity. However, when our focus on the ever-growing list of deliverables prevents us from resting in His presence, we too will be filled with anxiety and restlessness, and left depleted. We lose sight of the source of our strength and wrongfully believe that we alone are responsible for everything.

As you plan your day and dive into the unending list of tasks, take a moment to sit at His feet and allow His loving gaze to rest on you. Take a walk across campus, and soak in the beauty of His creation. Take a brief scripture break between meetings to hear His words. Pause and lift up a litany of gratitude for the blessings of your life. It is in those moments of sitting at His feet, that we are restored, renewed, and re-centered.

*Rachel Mulry
Associate CIO for Planning
and Customer Service*

Lord, we confess that we live distracted lives. We are worried and upset by many things. Yet, you remind us that few things are needed. Help us to choose what is better. And when distraction inevitably takes hold again, keep calling, “Martha, Martha.” Amen.

Saturday, February 17th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

Opening Invocation

Holy God, you are here. You are with me in the faces of friends and in the stillness of solitude. You, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer are here. May I be present now, even as you are present to me. Eternal Friend, this is my prayer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Reread the passage above. What "time" best describes your current season? Your current week?

Prayer for Others

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Christ be within to keep me, beside to guard me, before to lead me, behind to protect me, beneath to lead me, and above to bless me. Amen.

Week Two: Holy Time

Passage of the Week: Exodus 20:8-11

(8) “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. (11) For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

One of the practices that has united Christians around the world for centuries has been the remembrance of Sabbath. Often observed on Sundays, churches and communities gather to worship and pray as they refrain from their typical work weeks. However, Sabbath is more than a day to gather in churches or even simply to rest. The commandment to Sabbath is also a reminder that we are not commodities that work to produce in the world. We were not made to simply work more and more until there is nothing left. More so, Sabbath is a humbling practice that recognizes that God continues to work and move without us. As we explore this Holy Time, join us and ponder: What does rest look like? How is Sabbath deeper than simply “rest?” How might we view other areas of our lives through the lens of Sabbath?

Prayer of the Week:

Our Father in Heaven, give us today our daily rest. Too often, we mistake our worth as the sum of what we do from day to day. We seek fulfillment in what we produce rather than in you. Yet, you have modeled the way. Help us to set aside Holy Time that honors our truest identity as your beloved children. Amen.

Monday, February 19th

Often in the Gospels, Jesus retreats from the crowds for solitude and prayer. It seems every time he tries to get away, the crowds or the disciples track him down – always wanting something from him. These texts intrigue me – perhaps because I empathize with Jesus. Typically, crowds aren't tracking me down but my "to-do" list constantly invades my contemplative moments.

Inspired by the writing of Mirabai Starr and the Shabbat practices of the Lama Foundation, an inter-spiritual community in the mountains of northern New Mexico, I am committing myself in this Lenten Season to an intentional practice of Sabbath.

In her book *Wild Mercy: Living the Fierce and Tender Wisdom of the Woman Mystics*, Starr says, "The Sabbath is about rest, about laying down our burdens, and unhooking from the compulsion of the to-do list". Sabbath, she says, "resouls" us. She describes three blessings that welcome (or open) Sabbath observance: blessing of the candlelight, blessing of the wine, blessing of the bread. In my work as a University Chaplain, I've had the opportunity to join Jewish communities for Shabbat dinners and experience these blessings. At the heart of Shabbat (or Shabbos or Sabbath) is community – gathering with loved ones, laying aside everything else, and greeting the Divine.

My mantra for my Lenten practice of Sabbath is – good friends, good food, good wine. As Starr writes, "Divine Love is messy and riotous; it is intoxicating...[and] meant to be shared." In this Lenten season, I hope to practice "holy time" by drawing near to God and to others by creating space at the end of each week to gather with friends and loved ones. I hope to enjoy a good meal that reminds us of the bounty of the Earth and our connection to creation, and a glass of good wine, a symbol of God's overflowing love for us.

I suspect my Lenten practice will be interrupted - if not by people, then by my own busy-ness and overactive mind. Yet, intentionally marking "holy time" with good friends, good food, and good wine, reminds me of the abundance of God's Love and of our interdependence with God, one another, and the Earth.

*Rev. Lisa Garvin
Chaplain & Minister
to the University*

Our Father in Heaven, give us today our daily rest. Too often, we mistake our worth as the sum of what we do from day to day. We seek fulfillment in what we produce rather than in you. Yet, you have modeled the way.

Help us to set aside Holy Time that honors our truest identity as your beloved children. Amen.

Tuesday, February 20th

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work” (Exodus 20:9-10a). What a hot take by God! Are we sure Moses heard that one right? Had he not heard the timeless proverb “time is money”? Surely, God didn’t suggest that the grind... stops... right? Indeed, that’s exactly what God said.

As any studious Hebrew Bible reader knows, the Ten Commandments are the heart of Godly living. However, they aren’t all we have. In keeping with our season-long emphasis on time, I invite you to check out Leviticus 25 for more guidance on honoring God through Sabbath. In the early verses, we find rules about something called the “Sabbath Year.” Every seventh year was to be a Sabbath kept by the land itself. Even more radical, we learn in verses 8-12 that there was to be a Year of Jubilee, when all property was returned and debts were forgiven. Sabbath was introduced as simply rest, but the bigger picture shows that its spirit is about stewardship. Sabbath is about honoring God through the things that always belonged to God, anyway: time, land, money, and all that we have.

“The time we keep” is ours for now but God’s forever. As my humble southern roots taught me about possessions, you can’t take them with you. So, in the meantime, what will you do with your time to show that it properly belongs to God? What invitations can you decline so you can receive the rest God is offering? What obligations is Jesus begging to lift from your schedule so you can be with God? What side-hustle needs to be put down so that your time glorifies your God and not your brand? This Lenten season, I pray the easy yolk and light burden of Christ will gently guide you to examine the time you keep. For it is in our faithful and generous stewardship of God’s gifts that we are invited to sharpen the image of God’s love within us.

*Rev. Tripp Gullede
Perkins Class of 2025*

Our Father in Heaven, give us today our daily rest. Too often, we mistake our worth as the sum of what we do from day to day. We seek fulfillment in what we produce rather than in you. Yet, you have modeled the way. Help us to set aside Holy Time that honors our truest identity as your beloved children. Amen.

Wednesday, February 21st

“Rise and grind.”

”Girl boss.”

“Don’t wish for it. Work for it.”

Our society is filled with motivational sayings that are aimed to get us “up and at ‘em.” We’re constantly bombarded in our capitalist society with messages of productivity and hard work. Even when we take a break, the world around us would rather we focus on purchasing items that would make us believe we’re resting. The idea of holding hands with a stranger while they clean and polish your fingernails (a manicure) may not be your idea of spending a restful hour. Some may not find sitting in a tub of soapy water mixed with their filth (a bubble bath) or with a cold, wet sheet on their face (a mask) relaxing. With the help of advertisers, society has reduced rest to a spa day. Is that what God meant when God consecrated the seventh day?

An alternate directive can be found in The Nap Ministry’s “Rest Deck,” a deck of 50 cards with suggested practices and words of wisdom printed on each one. “My body is sacred. Exhaustion does not honor the sacred,” says one. God created our bodies and using these bodies to exhaustion does not respect this gift of life God has given to us. Your body is giving you clues on how best to give it rest, and it’s likely not tied to an act of purchasing. One’s body is frequently in need of a change, and our bodies tell us what they need, if only we will pause to listen. Another card from the “Rest Deck” says, “There are infinite ways to liberation. Expand. Rest now.” Forget the messages of the world for a moment and follow the guidance of your heartbeat and your calming breath. What better way to honor God than to care for the gift of the body God gave us? Amen.

Lily White

Perkins Class of 2025

Our Father in Heaven, give us today our daily rest. Too often, we mistake our worth as the sum of what we do from day to day. We seek fulfillment in what we produce rather than in you. Yet, you have modeled the way.

Help us to set aside Holy Time that honors our truest identity as your beloved children. Amen.

Thursday, February 22nd

Saturdays have always been a sacred time for me. During the Spring and Summer, you might find me playing some pickleball in the mornings. In the Fall, I'm likely relaxing on my couch flipping through a variety of football games. Regardless of the activity, Saturdays-and the weekends in general-are all about rest. I'm resting from my often-oversaturated schedule filled with an endless list of all the things that I need to do. I'm resting from a constant pressure to produce that our society has ingrained into my subconscious. I'm resting from work because my studies of the practice of Sabbath have taught me that Sabbath is more than self-care. It is a practice that reorients us to an alternative way of living established by God that honors our identity as God's beloved children and not the children of production.

While I firmly believe in the necessity of Sabbath, I'm also confronted with a difficult reality of my practice: I have the privilege and freedom to choose to rest. I do not have to work over the weekends or in the evenings in order to pay my bills. I have no children to care for during my "off-time." I have the financial freedom to plan a trip to go travel abroad occasionally. I am able to rest due to my circumstances, a set of circumstances that is not true for all people at all times.

A guest speaker during graduate school first confronted me with the notion that to be able to rest is a luxury that not all possess. The speaker challenged her audience to broaden our perspective of Sabbath beyond our own immediate need to recharge. For her, Sabbath was not only an act of rest for the self but also an opportunity for an act of care to others. If I believe in the necessity of Sabbath and if God calls me to love my neighbor as myself, perhaps my greatest act of Sabbath might mean creating space for others to practice for themselves. Of course, I would not suggest that we forgo our own need to rest simply because others are not able to do so-and our speaker that evening world agree. Instead, I wonder how we might find opportunities to give the gift of Sabbath rest to others as an act of love.

Bringing someone a meal, volunteering for childcare during a Parent's Night, or serving at a shelter are a few small ways we might consider offering the practice of Sabbath for others. Of course, this broader way of practicing Sabbath may not be feasible for us at all times, but it is a reminder that our rest is a gift, one that can be shared with others.

*Kaleb Loomis
Assistant Chaplain*

Our Father in Heaven, give us today our daily rest. Too often, we mistake our worth as the sum of what we do from day to day. We seek fulfillment in what we produce rather than in you. Yet, you have modeled the way. Help us to set aside Holy Time that honors our truest identity as your beloved children. Amen.

Friday, February 23rd

A few years ago, one of my students told me about an encounter he recently had with a Catholic friend of his. He told his friend that he had to skip Sunday Mass that day because of all the other work he had to do: papers, studying, final exams, etc.—we all know the complaints, and we all have expressed them ourselves.

After hearing him lament for a little while, his friend responded, “I can tell you’re busy. Got any time for God?”

The student told me this fraternal correction was a transformative moment for him. Previously, his attendance at church on Sundays was “hit or miss,” depending on how much work he felt he had to do. However, his faithful friend helped him see how he had turned his work into an idol and, as a result, eliminated God from his life.

The weekly worship of God on Sundays is, for Christians, a matter of divine precept (Exodus 20:8-11). Without resting in God each week, the faith quickly becomes reduced to yet another thing that we must do amidst the endless sea of responsibilities, social engagements, and projects. This toil of life begins to crush us, reducing life from “one darn thing after another” until the sleep of death takes us in the end.

The Sunday worship of God frees us from this fate. First and foremost, worshipping God every Sunday respects God’s divine law (His wise and unchanging arrangement of creation etched into the very DNA of the universe). Sunday worship also roots each week in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, who gives us true rest and eternal life in His heavenly Kingdom. Lastly, Sunday worship of God gives us a break from all the hustle and bustle of life.

Without time for God on Sundays, we are left empty. With time for God on Sundays, He truly draws us into His rest, life, and love.

*Fr. Wade Bass
Chaplain & Director
Catholic Campus Ministry at SMU*

Our Father in Heaven, give us today our daily rest. Too often, we mistake our worth as the sum of what we do from day to day. We seek fulfillment in what we produce rather than in you. Yet, you have modeled the way. Help us to set aside Holy Time that honors our truest identity as your beloved children. Amen.

Saturday, February 24th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

Opening Invocation

Holy God, you are here. You are with me in the faces of friends and in the stillness of solitude. You, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer are here. May I be present now, even as you are present to me. Eternal Friend, this is my prayer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Reread the passage above. What time best describes your current season? Your current week?

Prayer for Others

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Christ be within to keep me, beside to guard me, before to lead me, behind to protect me, beneath to lead me, and above to bless me. Amen.

Week Three: Busy Time

Passage of the Week: Luke 10:25-37

(25) On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (26) “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” (27) He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

(28) “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” (29) But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (30) In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. (31) A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. (32) So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. (33) But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. (34) He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. (35) The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ (36) “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

(37) The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Who is my neighbor? The story of the Good Samaritan challenges readers to broaden their perspective on who falls under the category of “neighbor,” but we another layer of this story highlights two other people too busy with what they have going on to be bothered to stop and help. I suspect the priest and the Levite had any number of good reasons not to stop and help. Perhaps they were running late for a meeting. Or maybe they assumed someone else would stop and help. Sound familiar? In the hustle and bustle of daily life, the story of the Good Samaritan asks us to reflect on the ways our busyness hinders the way we love God and love our neighbor.

Prayer of the Week:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners. Forgive us when we fail to love our neighbor. Forgive us because we also fail to love you. Forgive us for living lives too filled to stop and care for the people we pass along our busy streets of life. Amen.

Monday, February 26th

Big questions. Growing up, I was known for asking big questions, a trait reflected in the lawyer's question in this passage that you might yourself contemplate: how can we inherit eternal life? Jesus responds with the simple yet challenging command to love our neighbors. However, in the complexities of our modern world, meeting this directive becomes daunting. Verses 29-37 illustrate the failure to uphold The Law due to the constraints of time.

The parable of the Good Samaritan highlights the Samaritan as a model for loving our neighbors, but it also serves as a cautionary tale. The priest and Levite, too preoccupied with assisting the wounded man, demonstrate a common human failing—denying others help due to a lack of time. The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates both how to love and what to avoid. This prompts reflection on how often we deny others due to time. The priest and Levite, often condemned as sinful, might also be humanized as busy individuals who couldn't spare the time. This prompts introspection: are we, like the priest and Levite, too busy to fulfill Jesus' command of love? The parable underscores the importance of not just emulating the Samaritan but avoiding the shortcomings of the priest and Levite. It challenges us to examine our daily lives, acknowledging moments when busyness impedes our ability to love God and our neighbors as instructed by Jesus.

Throughout the scriptures, we see Jesus withdraw from the expectations of the crowd—in solitude, silence, and intimacy with God to pause. However, I have felt convicted about the time I keep regarding my faith. In the hustle & bustle of daily life, my busyness with school & work often hinders the way I love God & my neighbors. Because of this, I have to find moments to sit at the feet of Jesus. I've learned that by recognizing Jesus as the ultimate Good Samaritan in our lives, sacrificing Himself for us when we were the poor, hopeless man left for dead, Jesus died on our behalf.

*Gracie Holder
Class of 2024
Spiritual Life Mentor*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.
Forgive us when we fail to love our neighbor. Forgive us because we also
fail to love you. Forgive us for living lives too filled to stop and care for the
people we pass along our busy streets of life. Amen.*

Tuesday, February 27th

Someone will be born today, someone will get married, and someone else will land their dream job. Someone will close a business deal while someone else will do something amazing that gives them 15 minutes of fame. Today is a special day.

But today is also the last day someone will live and the day that someone will hear the words "the tumor is malignant." Someone else will learn their company no longer needs them or their spouse no longer wants them, and somebody will get a phone call that tells them someone they love has passed or gives other life-altering news.

These things will happen all around our city, but most of us are too busy to realize the significance of today because we do not think they will happen to us...at least not today. Therefore, we take tomorrow for granted and go on with our busy lives.

In Psalm 90:12, Moses asks God something we should all ask of Him....to "teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

A heart of wisdom lives one day at a time and never takes tomorrow for granted. Consequently, wise people always prioritize things like saying "I'm sorry," "I forgive you," "Thank You," and "I love you," as relationships are what truly matter in life.

Billy Graham once said, "The greatest waste in all of the earth, which cannot be recycled or reclaimed, is our waste of the time that God has given us each day."

May we slow down and realize the value of each day and never let the things on our calendar keep us so busy that we miss opportunities to live like Jesus, who loved and shared God's love with all who crossed His path. May we also learn to commune with God and be aware of His presence, even amid our busy days, wisely remembering to never take tomorrow for granted!

*Jim Barnett
Campus Minister
Mustangs for Christ*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.
Forgive us when we fail to love our neighbor. Forgive us because we also
fail to love you. Forgive us for living lives too filled to stop and care for the
people we pass along our busy streets of life. Amen.*

Wednesday, February 28th

In this week's reflection, we are challenged to pause and consider the story of the Good Samaritan. How often have I been like the one who passes by in a moment of need? I'm challenged to be generous with my time, treasures, and talent, both when it's convenient and not.

How do I ensure I am not like the religious leaders who were too pious to lend a hand? I believe one way is through the practice of humility. During the past year, I've held on to this word like a shiny gold coin I had been given. Recognizing it's a treasure that I don't inherently possess, I'm only beginning to see its value. In fact, the more I understand the worth of humility, the more I recognize how much I need to learn.

The word humility challenges me every time I look at her. She is quick to respond, quick to listen, and quick to obey. Prepared for what lies ahead, she's ready to move, willing to stop, and gracious enough to give with open hands.

Humility is leading with listening and leading to serve. She's a reflector of light both day and night, and she understands the art of hiding in the shadow or taking center stage if need be. Humility always focuses on the work of God, and out of His heart, she lends her hand. She does not hide but courageously gives of the blessings she possesses.

Prayer: As I consider the Good Samaritan, help me to walk the steps you have with enhanced focus, yet may I not be so single-minded that I forget to honor you or those you've placed in my path.

*Laurene Klassen
Director, IT & Training
Communications*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.
Forgive us when we fail to love our neighbor. Forgive us because we also
fail to love you. Forgive us for living lives too filled to stop and care for the
people we pass along our busy streets of life. Amen.*

Thursday, February 29th

In our frantic lives, filled with endless tasks and distractions, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that perhaps we lack the necessary margin for compassion and service. Our love for God and others often gets relegated to the background, overshadowed by our to-do lists, deadlines, personal goals, and the lure of digital distractions. And yet, every day, without noticing, we encounter the many opportunities "God prepared in advance" for us to make a difference in the lives of those around us (Ephesians 2:10).

However, the parable of the Good Samaritan, as told by Jesus, challenges us to break free from this cycle of busyness and distraction, illustrating how genuine compassion transcends our preconceived notions and biases. Jesus redefines our understanding of who our neighbor is, which is not only about loving those who are easy to love or those who can reciprocate our affection. Instead, Jesus places the Samaritan—a figure likely despised by his original audience—at the story's center. This Samaritan becomes a model of godly love, showing compassion towards a stranger in need.

Jesus's teaching challenges us to extend our love beyond our comfort zones to see every individual as a neighbor worthy of our love and attention. He calls us to truly see people and respond to their real-life situations, no matter their struggles. It's a reminder that our busy schedules should never become an excuse for neglecting the needs of those around us.

Moreover, Jesus compels us to set aside our judgments about who is worthy of God's love and who isn't. The Samaritan, perceived as unrighteous by societal standards, is presented as the true neighbor. This parable challenges our preconceived notions and invites us to make the most of every opportunity to participate in God's work in unconventional ways.

*Raquel Pérez Wroten
Doctor of Liberal Studies
Class of 2026*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.
Forgive us when we fail to love our neighbor. Forgive us because we also
fail to love you. Forgive us for living lives too filled to stop and care for the
people we pass along our busy streets of life. Amen.*

Friday, March 1st

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’ And he said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.’ And he went throughout all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.” (Mark 1:35-39)

We can relate to this passage amid a busy day, week, month, and year. Significant demands upon our time and attention can move a person towards anxiety, paralysis, or procrastination. When we look at the ministry of Jesus in this passage, there were significant demands on His time as everyone was fighting for Him to enter their town to hear from Him. Yet, we see here that He rose very early in the morning, where He prayed and spent time with the Father. No one was busier than Jesus as He was amid His ministry and journey, going from town to town proclaiming the message of the Kingdom and the Gospel. How can we find rest in the Lord following Jesus' example? Finding time to spend time with the Lord in prayer.

With Jesus' example of how to find peace and rest in the Lord amid a busy schedule and attention to our time, I want us to reflect on our days, weeks, months, and years and ask a couple of questions to help reorient and ground you in amidst busy times. What is robbing you of your joy in the Lord? Is it your phone? Binge-watching TV shows? How can you ground yourself in spiritual practices when your schedule seems out of control? What does it look like to read the Bible daily? Practice five minutes of solitude with no technology. Go for a walk and enjoy outside. What do my sleeping, workout, and nutrition practices look like? We can go on, but I hope these questions and this passage will help you find rest amid the schedule of a college student.

*Steven Nguyen
Campus Minister
Athletes in Action*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.
Forgive us when we fail to love our neighbor. Forgive us because we also
fail to love you. Forgive us for living lives too filled to stop and care for the
people we pass along our busy streets of life. Amen.*

Saturday, March 2nd

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

Opening Invocation

Holy God, you are here. You are with me in the faces of friends and in the stillness of solitude. You, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer are here. May I be present now, even as you are present to me. Eternal Friend, this is my prayer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Reread the passage above. What time best describes your current season? Your current week?

Prayer for Others

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Christ be within to keep me, beside to guard me, before to lead me, behind to protect me, beneath to lead me, and above to bless me. Amen.

Week Four: Community Time

Passage of the Week: Acts 2:42-47

(42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (43) Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. (44) All the believers were together and had everything in common. (45) They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. (46) Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, (47) praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

When we think of rest, images of time spent alone often come to mind, but community remains a key theme in the Christian life. Community is a sacred space of belonging. Yet, the various communities that we belong to can enhance our time for rest and hinder it as well. The early church described in Acts 2 gives us one image by which we might reflect on community. This week consider how community supports and interferes with the Sabbath rest. What does restful, life-giving community look like? Why is it a vital aspect of Christian life?

Prayer of the Week:

We confess that we are imperfect people living in imperfect communities. Yet, we know that you call us to be together. God, help us to honor our sacred time together. Teach us to live and love, sharing everything in common, especially when it is difficult. Remind us that we need one another to better know you.

Monday, March 4th

In the limbo dance, the aim is to go low without touching the bar. Similarly, society often urges us to climb higher, asking, "How high can you go?" However, the Lenten season calls us to a different challenge – to ask ourselves, "How low can I go to serve others?"

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul addresses the societal pursuit of status and presents Jesus as the epitome of humility. Roman Philippi valued climbing the social ladder, viewing humility as a virtue for slaves, not esteemed citizens. Paul challenges this perspective, advocating for humility and unity.

True unity, Paul asserts, comes when individuals prioritize others' interests over their own. Human sinfulness impedes genuine humility, making Jesus' example crucial. Paul encourages the Philippians to embrace the humility Christ demonstrated.

Exploring Philippians 2:6-11, we witness Jesus descending to the lowest point imaginable. From the form of God, he willingly became human, even facing a humiliating death on a cross – a status lower than any in Roman Philippi. Yet, God exalted him above all.

This Lenten season challenges us to reflect on Jesus, who emptied and humbled himself for our salvation. Instead of society asking, "How high do you want to go?" Lent prompts us to respond, "I want to be the lowest to serve others in my community." As we journey through Lent, actively practicing the humility of Jesus, we open ourselves to the exaltation of God's mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6).

*Eunbyul "Stella" Cho
Perkins Class of 2025
Spiritual Life Mentor*

We confess that we are imperfect people living in imperfect communities. Yet, we know that you call us to be together. God, help us to honor our sacred time together. Teach us to live and love, sharing everything in common, especially when it is difficult. Remind us that we need one another to better know you.

Tuesday, March 5th

Authentic Christianity is deeply and inescapably communal. While each of us is called into personal relationship with the Lord, that relationship takes on its true meaning only in the context of God's collective covenant with His people. The Christian life is most fully lived in communion with other believers. This is true for the moments of great joy—as when we celebrate together the Incarnation at Christmas or the Resurrection at Easter—but also for the more somber, reflective times, like this penitential season of Lent.

The intense pressures and busyness of our society, coupled with its emphasis on the privatization of faith, mitigate against us taking time for collective repentance. Yet the ancient practices of the Church very much call us to that. On Ash Wednesday, the faithful together receive a visible mark of our fallenness—in the sign of the cross that is our collective hope for redemption. In a Catholic Mass, as we publicly acknowledge our sinfulness in the *Confiteor*, we ask all the angels and saints and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ to pray to the Lord for our forgiveness. This powerfully unites us in our penitence with all those who have walked, are walking, and will walk the same journey of faith. It emphasizes that God has, in the Church, given us each other as helps along the road of sanctification.

In the spirit of Acts 2, take time this Lenten season to walk alongside other believers in the journey of repentance, helping them and being helped by them. Invite a friend to join you for worship on a Sunday. Instead of just reading scripture in private devotion, discuss it with other believers to get a fuller sense of its meaning. Do the hard work of confessing, not just to God but to others, where you have fallen short, and ask them to pray for you. These things take more time and effort than a purely private faith. But they crucially emphasize for us that our journey to Calvary, and ultimately to the glory that lies beyond, is one that we make in the company of the whole Church.

*Dr. Matthew Wilson
Professor of Political Science
Director of the Center for Faith
& Learning*

We confess that we are imperfect people living in imperfect communities. Yet, we know that you call us to be together. God, help us to honor our sacred time together. Teach us to live and love, sharing everything in common, especially when it is difficult. Remind us that we need one another to better know you.

Wednesday, March 6th

"I'm just too busy this semester." As a Spiritual Life Mentor for Ware Commons, I have heard this sentence countless times. Talking with students about their challenges during my office hours has taught me that while many students long for meaningful relationships, they often worry that they are too busy to see friends. My own academic career has shown me first-hand how juggling work, school, and a social life can make participating in the community feel impossible at times. Unfortunately, Christian fellowship can seem like a burden when life gets hectic. However, Luke's depiction of the early church in Acts 2:42-47 reveals that Christian fellowship is not only a gift that brings us solace during times of distress but is also accessible to our daily lives.

In Acts 2, Luke describes how early Christians took comfort in one another when the outside world overwhelmed them. Early Christians shared everything, from the bread that they broke together to their personal property. In fact, their willingness to provide emotional support to each other during times of distress made God observable to nonbelievers. As Matthew 18:20 puts it, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them." The early Christians' sense of fraternity brought them closer to one another, but it also brought them closer to God as they cared for one another despite adversity.

Importantly, Acts 2:42-47 also indicates that fellowship takes many forms. Early Christians forged relationships through ordinary tasks like sharing a meal together or helping others when a need arose in their daily lives. Incorporating fellowship into our lifestyles, therefore, should evolve with our capabilities. As Christians, we must share our lives with one another more than ever when the world feels oppressive, just as the early Christians found support in their community.

*Hailey Hazen
Class of 2024
Spiritual Life Mentor*

We confess that we are imperfect people living in imperfect communities. Yet, we know that you call us to be together. God, help us to honor our sacred time together. Teach us to live and love, sharing everything in common, especially when it is difficult. Remind us that we need one another to better know you.

Thursday, March 7th

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers...All the believers were united and shared everything. (Acts 2.42, 44)

The Lenten journey may feel lonely. If you imagine Jesus in the desert for 40 days being tempted – we imagine him facing Satan alone. Whether or not he was physically alone, we know that Jesus carried his community of faith with him wherever he was.

As you make this Lenten journey, spend time today giving thanks for the communities you carry in your heart that sustain you. My home church always comes to mind, first – the many saints, Sunday school teachers, clergy people, friends much older than me and some younger than me. In the baptismal covenant of The United Methodist Church the congregation commits to surround the one being baptized “with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ”. My home church has kept that commitment with me (and so many more). More than 30 years after leaving my hometown for college, I’m still learning from the love and forgiveness I experienced there.

In part because of their love and affirmation, I attended a United Methodist college and my friends there are another community that gives me life. I am fully alive when I’m on campus or at an alumni event! Like the early church in Acts, we share an experience that centered on teaching, community, and meals...and prayers (mostly on exam days!). At least once a year, I gather with a group of my sorority sisters. We support one another through the most joyful celebrations and times of deepest sorrow – whether together or apart. When we are together, we are drawn back to the core of our individual identities. We love one another unconditionally. We believe in each other and offer one another affirmation, encouragement and a lot of humor!

When I’m tempted to give up on my dreams, sell myself short or take myself too seriously, I am surrounded by many communities of love and forgiveness who – near or far – shape me as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. My prayer for each of you today is that you, too, have multiple communities whose love offers Sabbath rest and makes you fully alive!

*Rev. Lisa Garvin
Chaplain & Minister
to the University*

We confess that we are imperfect people living in imperfect communities. Yet, we know that you call us to be together. God, help us to honor our sacred time together. Teach us to live and love, sharing everything in common, especially when it is difficult. Remind us that we need one another to better know you.

Friday, March 8th

The classroom was one of the last places I thought I'd ever find restful, life-giving community, but I discovered such a community on Friday mornings during my final semester of graduate school. This unique class had each participant read and study a personally selected figure or movement in church history for the entire semester in order to bring that "voice" to help answer the main question for the semester, "What is the Church?" While I was excited for this class with one of my favorite professors, I was not particularly thrilled at the idea of an 8:00 AM class on Fridays all semester. If you have ever had a primarily discussion-based, 2-hour long class before, you can imagine that early mornings are not always conducive to robust conversation.

For my own sake, I knew I needed something to motivate me and make the most out of this less-than-ideal class time. What gets most people excited? Food, of course. With the permission of our professor, I brought breakfast to that first Friday class and offered to coordinate volunteers to bring food the remainder of the semester. To my delight, each week had one or two fellow classmates commit to hosting our breakfast each week. My plan had worked, but I would have never guessed how this small attempt to alleviate the burden of an early morning class would shape our time throughout the semester.

Throughout the semester, we shared a table of food, debated who made up the church, and grew in our understandings of ourselves and God. Ironically, our class about the church turned into a small church community for one another. We broke bread using homemade muffins and coffee; we worshipped by debating one another; and we devoted ourselves to learn and grow together. No one performed any signs or wonders, but we performed a miracle by turning our ordinary classroom into sacred ground. My Friday morning class was not only one of my favorite parts of the week that semester, but also, it became a source of rest and life for me during that season.

Six years later, I sometimes wish I were waking up on a Friday to go to that class. If I learned anything about community from my time with those friends, I discovered that the most special communities are surprisingly simple at times, end sooner than you'd like, and might be initiated by something as unsuspecting as a box of donuts. As you journey through this Lenten season, I hope you discover places of community that might be similarly life-giving for you.

Kaleb Loomis
Assistant Chaplain

We confess that we are imperfect people living in imperfect communities. Yet, we know that you call us to be together. God, help us to honor our sacred time together. Teach us to live and love, sharing everything in common, especially when it is difficult. Remind us that we need one another to better know you.

Saturday, March 9th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

Opening Invocation

Holy God, you are here. You are with me in the faces of friends and in the stillness of solitude. You, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer are here. May I be present now, even as you are present to me. Eternal Friend, this is my prayer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Reread the passage above. What time best describes your current season? Your current week?

Prayer for Others

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Christ be within to keep me, beside to guard me, before to lead me, behind to protect me, beneath to lead me, and above to bless me. Amen.

Author Information

Week Five: Stormy Time

Passage of the Week: Mark 35-41

(35) That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." (36) Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. (37) A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. (38) Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

(39) He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. (40) He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

(41) They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

What do we do when it feels like God is asleep and doesn't seem to care? As we journey the season of Lent, we reflect this week on what faith looks like during "Stormy" Time. The disciples find themselves in the middle of a raging storm, but Jesus is inside the boat fast asleep. In their fear, they wake Jesus, asking the question many of us may find ourselves asking in our storms of life: don't you care about me? How each of us navigates faith during our stormy time is different, but we are reminded over and over that God, Lord of the raging waters, is in the midst of those storms with us.

Prayer of the Week:

God, Lord of Creation, remind us of your perpetual presence. Remind us that you are there in the back of the boat. Remind us, like the waves, to be still and know you are God. Amen.

Monday, March 11th

“The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.” (Psalm 34:10)

While I stared at my ceiling at 2 a.m. for the 4th sleepless night in a row, anxious about the following day’s colonoscopy seeking to diagnose 6 months of undiagnosed (and extreme) gastrointestinal pain, I was definitely not thinking that I “lack no good thing.” This condition not only forced me to quit my job and take a small leave from school, but it also took me out of college softball recruitment- which I spent 13 years working for. “What else would it, or could it, take away from me?” I thought as a high school junior.

I finally received a diagnosis, but the doctors weren’t able to tell us why the condition appeared in the first place. Thus if I couldn’t change the situation, I changed my question from “Why pain?” and “Why me?” to “What is God teaching me through this?” I had 4 years of recovery and a whole lifetime to figure it out.

More than the pain, more than the unknown reason behind the pain, I remembered the sleepless nights I spent alone with only God. I remembered crying to God restless and weak, knowing He was there but not feeling that it was enough. It was in this time that I realized that the only one who is always there in any situation is God. And if the presence of the God of the universe isn’t enough to satisfy my every need and want in every circumstance, then nothing ever will. He is equally present in our greatest successes and worst moments, even the unknown.

Don’t get me wrong, the storms of life are challenging and can be very frightening, but, for a while, all I could see was what I didn’t have. Yet because I have God, I have everything that is good. And that’s a great thing.

Carlie Lara
Class of 2024

God, Lord of Creation, remind us of your perpetual presence. Remind us that you are there in the back of the boat. Remind us, like the waves, to be still and know you are God. Amen.

Tuesday, March 12th

"I can't believe this," I said as I looked at my newborn daughter sleeping in my wife's arms. "Can't believe what?" my wife asked. "How much she trusts us!" We recently welcomed our second child, and I still can't believe how much our daughter trusts us. Even in the chaos of her parents navigating a new normal, she sleeps peacefully in our arms.

How should we respond to the storms we face? The first step is to recognize that storms have a purpose. Trials reveal our true character and show us where our trust really lies. They invite us to examine the worthiness of the objects of our hope. How can Jesus be fast asleep as this boat was on the verge of capsizing in the middle of the sea? The storm revealed the perfect trust that Jesus had in his heavenly Father.

The disciples' astonishment at Jesus's sleep turns into reverent fear as he rebukes the waves and calms the storm. Only God has the power to command the natural world, they're not dealing with any normal person. Jesus's questioning of the disciples' faith is a gracious invitation to examine the object of their trust. As with all of his miracles, Jesus is showing the disciples the coming of God's kingdom in the incarnation of the Son of God. The One who calmed the storm is the One worthy of their ultimate trust.

The disciples were not in this storm alone, Jesus was right there with them. He would go on to bear the final storm on the cross and achieve the final victory in his resurrection. We are invited to entrust ourselves to him completely because in him... we have a hope that can face any storm.

*Fee Kennedy
Campus Minister
RUF-International*

God, Lord of Creation, remind us of your perpetual presence. Remind us that you are there in the back of the boat. Remind us, like the waves, to be still and know you are God. Amen.

Wednesday, March 13th

In the boat, on the brink, the disciples look out upon the waves.

They know these waters. And they know their situation is dire.

Yet, Jesus sleeps.

Like Odysseus; like Jonah.

Unperturbed by the chaos threatening to drag down everyone into Sheol.

"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

Our reader knows what the disciples don't. And what the Evangelist presumes they should.

Would Jesus really let them all perish?

Of course not.

And so he wakes.

First to upbraid the wind and the waves, then to rebuke his followers.

"Why are you so afraid? Do you still not trust?"

Huddled in the darkness, the disciples tremble, knowing less about their world now than just moments before.

There is nothing so certain as the certainty of time.

(sand in the hourglass and all that).

And yet, in spite of its preciousness; despite its tightly limited supply, we often spend our time on worry, fear, and anxiety.

Our most precious gems spent on worthless wares.

It's not that there aren't reasons. There's no end to them.

The disciples could point to any number of waves to justify their anxiety.

And we can name a hundred ways in which our lives may pitch, roll, or go under.

Our story is not one of rejecting or ignoring our reality.

It's an admonition to find a new way of seeing, in spite of the realities there.

It is a challenge to look at the elements of life that overwhelm us and choose, despite the fear this drums up in us, to trust that things will work out.

It is a clarion call to spend the time we have trusting in Beauty.

After all, if time is precious, why spend it on fear?

*Dr. Jon-Michael Carman
Religious Life Coordinator*

God, Lord of Creation, remind us of your perpetual presence. Remind us that you are there in the back of the boat. Remind us, like the waves, to be still and know you are God. Amen.

Thursday, March 14th

When life gets rocky and times become unsure, it can be easy to shut everyone out and try to brace the struggle on your own. You wonder, where is God in my time of need? The greatest storms in my life have brought me both challenges and clarity in my individual faith. One of these storms literally manifested into a tornado that destroyed my house at the beginning of my sophomore year of High School. I had to temporarily separate from my parents and stay with my grandparents when the Covid-19 pandemic skyrocketed, placing us all in lockdown and elongating my new living situation. All of these events kept me from relating to the people in my life. I felt completely alone and misunderstood. I sealed myself up and allowed all those emotions to fester and did not know how to become unstuck.

Sometimes, in our effort to stay afloat, we forget to reach for help, and we need a reminder. It was in a Church, where I got this reminder. A small group of my peers encouraged me to open my heart up to God, and there I was able to accept His help. I found peace by surrendering my worries to Him and His plan, and just doing my best with what was within my control. I found comfort and relationships in the community provided by Him in the church and unconditionally loving people around me. The parable of Mark 4:35-41, finds Jesus asleep on a boat during a raging storm that terrifies the disciples. In their fear, they wake Jesus, asking Him if He even cares. After calming the storm, Jesus questions His followers: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

We often find ourselves becoming absorbed by our circumstances; however, through the waves and the storms, Jesus is a constant who gifts us with the knowledge that we are never alone. It is our duty to remember that God has a plan for us. To believe in Him is to have peace, for His will shall be done. Still, in our imperfection, we can be distracted by the storm. So, how do we center our focus? We go back to the foundations of faith. We think about what is connecting us to Jesus at the moment. What did He do in my shoes, because that's what He did when He became man on earth, and in this instance, Christ rested; on the boat; in the storm; because He knew the truth of God and His Holy Word. In your own way and capacity, you can take a moment of rest to reflect and sit with God. It does not have to be a complicated rambling or a study of scripture. It is as simple as stating what you see on the path before you and asking not to walk it alone. Your faith is a never ending relationship with God and the story of your growth, that perseveres through the toughest storms. At the lowest points, remember God's plan for you and His presence in your heart.

*Gracyn Buckner
Class of 2026
Spiritual Life Mentor*

God, Lord of Creation, remind us of your perpetual presence. Remind us that you are there in the back of the boat. Remind us, like the waves, to be still and know you are God. Amen.

Friday, March 15th

“Why were you afraid?” the Lord asks. In the sudden calm after the storm, my fears melt away. They now seem silly; Jesus was there the whole time. As I watch the Lord calm the wind and waves, as I see His power working, trust seems easy. So why was I afraid? As the storm raged and God was silent, I couldn’t understand why He seemingly did nothing, why Jesus slept. Trust comes easily in sunshine and gentle breeze. But it is in terrifying storms—when I fight a temptation to scream, “don’t you care that I’m perishing?”—that real trust must grow. Looking back, I was afraid because the Lord was quiet. He was acting, but God did not tell me what He was doing, or how He was going to take care of me. He was just in the boat with me. It is easy to “trust” the Lord when I can see what God is doing, when I know what I am supposed to do. But in those moments, I don’t really trust God; I trust my strength and my expectations of what God will do.

In sleeping, Jesus was not forgetting me. He was showing me how to face a storm. Sleeping is an act of deep trust. In falling asleep, I trust God to take care of me in ways I will neither see nor know. Earlier that day, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven was like seeds that are planted. They sprout and grow while the farmer sleeps, and “he knows not how.” The Lord quietly pours blessings in sleep, as Psalm 127 notes. In sleeping, I let go of my need to see God work. I let the Lord work in the dark and wait to see the blessings in the light.

*Margaret Abruzzo
Associate Director of Ministry
Catholic Campus Ministry at SMU*

God, Lord of Creation, remind us of your perpetual presence. Remind us that you are there in the back of the boat. Remind us, like the waves, to be still and know you are God. Amen.

Saturday, March 16th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

Opening Invocation

Holy God, you are here. You are with me in the faces of friends and in the stillness of solitude. You, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer are here. May I be present now, even as you are present to me. Eternal Friend, this is my prayer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Reread the passage above. What time best describes your current season? Your current week?

Prayer for Others

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Christ be within to keep me, beside to guard me, before to lead me, behind to protect me, beneath to lead me, and above to bless me. Amen.

Week Six: "Wasted Time"

Passage of the Week: John 12:1-8

(1) Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. (2) Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. (3) Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

(4) But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, (5) "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." (6) He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

(7) "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. (8) You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

When we read the stories of Judas, the disciple who would betray Jesus, it is often easy for us to villainize him. More often than not however, Judas is a stand-in for us. Like Judas, we spend much of our time lamenting "wasted" resources. We strive for efficiency, feel a need to produce, and even use worthwhile reasons to justify our own pursuits. The season of Lent challenges us to re-examine our resources, energy, and time, and this story asks readers to re-evaluate what is most important to them. Like Mary, how might we use something precious to us for something sacred instead.

Prayer of the Week:

Forgive us Lord. In our constant pursuit of doing more and more, of being efficient producers and workers, we distort the precious things of life. Most of all, we distort the gift of you. Teach us to reimagine our "waste" and point us back to you.

Monday, March 18th

While reflecting on the upcoming season of Lent, I regret to say that I have historically acted quite similar to Judas. Like Judas, who disguised his greed as charity, I have all too often hidden secular pursuits behind a facade of Lenten sacrifice. My previous fasting decisions have gone something like this: Am I hoping to lose a few pounds? I'll give up desserts for Lent! Have I been trying to cut my caffeine intake? I'll give up my second and third cup of coffee (after all, I can't be expected to cut caffeine entirely). You see where I'm going. And I think many of us struggle with this. After identifying a goal in line with our self-interest (which in another context might be entirely worthwhile), we sacrifice what affects that goal. We finish Lent, accomplish our goal of losing five pounds because we gave up desserts, and then we remember, "Oh yeah, you're welcome for my sacrifice, God!" One problem: God was an afterthought. We tend to distort the worthwhile cause (growing closer to the Lord by participating in Lenten sacrifice) in pursuit of our own self-interests. So too did Judas distort a worthwhile cause with his own self-interest.

This Lent season, I think it is wise to remember that whatever we have chosen to sacrifice during the season of Lent is the means to obtaining a greater end: spiritual growth. It is all too easy to instead use our Lenten sacrifice as a means of obtaining a selfish end: our own secular desires. Whatever we have chosen to sacrifice, we should feel the loss and remember Jesus's time of prayer and fasting in the desert; our temporary and minor suffering is nothing compared to what Jesus has endured for us. Have a blessed ending to this Lent season!

Colin Hickl
Dedman School of Law
Class of 2024

Forgive us Lord. In our constant pursuit of doing more and more, of being efficient producers and workers, we distort the precious things of life. Most of all, we distort the gift of you. Teach us to reimagine our “waste” and point us back to you.

“WASTED” TIME

Tuesday, March 19th

Time is precious. We should not waste it, and time well spent is never a waste. Have you ever built a relationship with someone whom others believed to be a lost cause? Despite what other people may say, when we invest our time in getting to know each other, we do not waste our time. Building a loving friendship or relationship with someone is a sacred endeavor, not a wasteful one. We are given the model of a loving relationship through Jesus, who is sacred love and wants to be in a relationship with us. God doesn't consider us to be a waste of time. In the Gospel of John, Mary pours expensive perfume over Jesus' feet and cleans his feet with her hair. Judas scoffs at this “waste” of a resource he claims could be sold and the money used to care for the poor. Judas uses disingenuous words to cover up his true desire to steal from the money the perfume could be sold for. Judas saw the perfume as a means to take money, while Mary saw it as a means to love Jesus. Jesus stands up for Mary, not because she anointed him with expensive perfume, but because she showed him love. When we hate each other, we waste our most precious gift in life: love. When we spend time loving God and those around us, we flourish in this life.

*Nancy Brockman
Perkins Class of 2024*

Forgive us Lord. In our constant pursuit of doing more and more, of being efficient producers and workers, we distort the precious things of life. Most of all, we distort the gift of you. Teach us to reimagine our “waste” and point us back to you.

Wednesday, March 20th

Last year, I turned the ripe, old age of 30 and lived to tell the tale! 30 always felt foreboding, like I needed to know the answers to life’s most important questions. Spoiler alert, that didn’t happen...yet turning 30 has unexpectedly released me from the shackles that held me captive for most of my young adulthood. Limitations caused by expectations of precisely how I “should” be spending my time poisoned my twenties, but this decade, I declared, “No more.”

No more judgment, no more harshness, no more guilt. These weapons of self-loathing surfaced every time I compared myself to a peer, one who seemingly possessed everything I desired: success, relationships, opportunities, etc. The lens through which I interpreted my own reality only reflected what I was missing, how I was failing. Yet, this was not the complete picture. Joys, blessings, answered prayers...they were all there. I just couldn’t accept it that God was working through me in God’s own way.

Paul writes, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12). 30 has invited me to take the sleeve of my sweater and wipe off the smudges of how I view myself, allowing me to gaze into God’s grace more clearly. The lack of accomplishments and checklist items I once sought in my twenties are no longer a source of shame for me. Rather, I finally understand how God has used this precious time; I am free from my own shadows of doubt. Looking into what lies ahead, I pray to fearlessly face the image of someone fully known, determined to never again dim the light of God within me.

Rachel Fisher
Perkins Class of 2026

Forgive us Lord. In our constant pursuit of doing more and more, of being efficient producers and workers, we distort the precious things of life. Most of all, we distort the gift of you. Teach us to reimagine our “waste” and point us back to you.

“WASTED” TIME

Thursday, March 21st

Parents will tell their kids to stop wasting time reading comic books. There are chores to do, homework to finish, sports, and music to practice. You know, things that are good for them!

Lately, I have found some comic books on Amazon I read as a child in the late '70s and early '80s. These were Spire Christian Comics, and our church bookstore sold them after service on Sundays. Some were retellings of Bible stories like Noah's Ark, and some were biographies of believers (I had the one of Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry). But my favorite Spire comics licensed the Archie characters to teach kids about God's love and about their value in God's eyes. It may have looked as though I was wasting time reading them. But decades later, I still visualize some Bible passages the way these comics illustrated them, because this is where I first learned and understood them.

Judas only saw the expensive ointment as valuable if it sold for money; any other use was a waste. But the ointment was not meant for profit any more than my comics were meant for mindless entertainment. Things have a face value that the world judges them to have. But they also have a higher value than that when they are used to honor the most valuable thing any of us can possess: Christ. So, sing in church, draw those pictures, enter those competitions, read those comics! The world may see it as wasted time, but you can see it as time spent with – and for – the God who loves us.

*Erin Herdon
Master of Sacred Music
Class of 2024*

Forgive us Lord. In our constant pursuit of doing more and more, of being efficient producers and workers, we distort the precious things of life. Most of all, we distort the gift of you. Teach us to reimagine our “waste” and point us back to you.

Friday, March 22nd

At its most basic, efficiency has to do with getting the most out of our resources: our efforts, our money, and—most especially—our time. When our resources are in short supply, figuring out ways to stretch them as far as possible often feels like the most important thing to do for a myriad of reason. And when we take that principle into the realm of the sacred, then the quest for efficiency becomes not only a matter of productivity, but also a matter of good stewardship, even a measure of holiness.

Let me say that—in and of itself—the concept of efficiency isn’t somehow bad or unhelpful. There are definitely times and places where being efficient is not only useful but also needed: I’m grateful that I can toss dirty laundry in a washing machine and dryer instead of having to haul them to the nearest water source to hand wash them, drag them back home, and then hang them out to dry.

That said, just because being efficient can be a good, helpful tool doesn’t mean that it’s the most important tool in the world. In fact, if we stop to look at this story about Mary and Jesus, I don’t see a God who necessarily encourages or cares for efficiency. There’s nothing efficient about how this scene plays out: why wipe Jesus’s feet with her hair when Mary could have used a towel? In strictly financial terms, Judas is probably right at how the perfume would’ve translated into more money for ministry. And yet, Jesus doesn’t join Judas in chastising Mary. Instead, Jesus holds up Mary as a reminder that sometimes, encountering God happens through the most inefficient times, ways, and uses of resources.

Rev. Mallory Morris

Pastor, First United Lutheran Church

Forgive us Lord. In our constant pursuit of doing more and more, of being efficient producers and workers, we distort the precious things of life. Most of all, we distort the gift of you. Teach us to reimagine our “waste” and point us back to you.

Saturday, March 23rd

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

Opening Invocation

Holy God, you are here. You are with me in the faces of friends and in the stillness of solitude. You, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer are here. May I be present now, even as you are present to me. Eternal Friend, this is my prayer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
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a time for war and a time for peace.

Reread the passage above. What time best describes your current season? Your current week?

Prayer for Others

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Christ be within to keep me, beside to guard me, before to lead me, behind to protect me, beneath to lead me, and above to bless me. Amen.

Week Seven: Gifted Time

Passage of the Week: Mark 2:23-27

(23) One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. (24) The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

(25) He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? (26) In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

(27) Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (28) So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

The season of Lent is spent in repentance and remembrance. As we enter Holy Week, our final reflections return us back to Sabbath. More importantly, this passage reminds us to view Sabbath as a gift from God. We have explored all the many ways we might consider time throughout this devotional. The call to practice Sabbath proclaims that God has built a rhythm in life not defined by deadlines, tasks, and schedules. Practicing Sabbath is not simply a rule to follow, but a gift to be received. This week, we remember this gift and the gift of Jesus's redemptive work on the cross. How have we taken either for granted?

Prayer of the Week:

Gracious God, the raiser of the Sun, setter of the moon, Lord of the Sabbath, you have given us the gift of time. Forgive us for the ways we fail to honor this gift, and all that you offer us. Teach us to honor the time that we keep.

Monday, March 25th

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. (Exodus 20:8)

Sabbath is a time set apart outside of time, a feeling of timelessness and “be-ing-ness.” It is a time to look back and give thanks, a time to look forward with hope.

I love any TV show or film which involves time-travel, from Terminator to Dr. Who. Some storytellers search for the science of what we believe is possible and others capitalize on the reality that we know so little about, time as a dimension. Theologically we confess that God is within and outside of time, observing and participating in all times at all times. In more traditional words, God is omnipresent. When we seek a connection with God in prayer, we enter into an echo of God’s omnipresence. When we set aside time as rest and even Sabbath, we step out of time, and we travel to where God is. God is in the past, seeing our pain and joy, forgiving our wrongdoing, and celebrating our growth. God is in the future, dreaming of who we may become, how we might forgive the person who harmed us, and how we might reconcile with someone we have hurt.

May you find some time-traveling companions and take time set apart as holy. Step outside of the present and give thanks for God’s blessings, then dream about where God will be taking you next. When we practice Sabbath, we receive the gift of God’s omnipresence where all things are possible and wholeness may be found. God of All Time, hold our thoughts and our breath as we put our daily schedules on hold and embrace your goodness in all ways and always, Amen.

*Kati Collins
Perkins Class of 2024*

Gracious God, the raiser of the Sun, setter of the moon, Lord of the Sabbath, you have given us the gift of time. Forgive us for the ways we fail to honor this gift, and all that you offer us. Teach us to honor the time that we keep.

Tuesday, March 26th

At a Christian retreat I attended last Fall, we had a “Silent Morning” – an hour set aside where our only task was to be silent. At first, my reaction was repulsive. What would I do for a full hour without anything to keep me occupied? Or even, why waste this time? My low expectations of this activity were replaced by a time of incredible reward and satisfaction. As I wandered the campgrounds, I found myself doing things that I never did in my regular routines: listening intently to the sounds of nature, giving thanks to God for all His blessings, and praying about those things that I never wanted to think about. It was just me and God, and nothing else.

Oftentimes, I feel like rest is a barrier to achieving my goals, an obstacle to my productivity. But Jesus reminds us in Mark 2:27 that rest is made for our benefit. What if we learned to cherish quiet times and to realize the benefits that can be reaped from those moments?

I've learned to incorporate prayer journaling into my life as a form of rest. Even if it's just two or three minutes, writing down my thoughts to God relieves me of my burdens and grows my intimacy with Him. The beautiful thing is that God always hears us (unlike us, He is never too busy). Not only that, we can rest in the fact that He loves us as individuals and cares for each aspect of our lives (see 1 Peter 5:7, Matthew 11:28).

So, how are you incorporating restful moments into your life? What is your quiet time?

As we approach Easter, we are reminded of Jesus' salvation-giving work at the cross. Through our faith in Jesus, we don't have to constantly chase something to earn God's favor. Our salvation has already been won, and we can securely rest in our identity as a beloved child of God. Let's thank God for his wonderful gift of eternal rest for our souls!

*Miles Chen
Class of 2026*

Gracious God, the raiser of the Sun, setter of the moon, Lord of the Sabbath, you have given us the gift of time. Forgive us for the ways we fail to honor this gift, and all that you offer us. Teach us to honor the time that we keep.

Wednesday, March 27th



The Canaanite Woman's Faith (2024)
Virginia Dean

Matthew 15:21-28 shares the story of a Canaanite woman who came before Jesus to ask him to heal her dying daughter. Jesus, hearing out her argument and plea, remarks that her faith is great and heals the woman's daughter. The grace, love, and health of Christ is not limited to only those who have lived perfect Christian lives but rather to all those who come to Christ, regardless of their time in life. We have all been gifted time to live where the opportunity to return to God, despite our failings and sins, is infinite.

Virginia Dean
Class of 2026

Gracious God, the raiser of the Sun, setter of the moon, Lord of the Sabbath, you have given us the gift of time. Forgive us for the ways we fail to honor this gift, and all that you offer us. Teach us to honor the time that we keep.

Thursday, March 28th

Some 10,000 years ago, creatures like us began to honor their dead. Their simple burial practices locate death within a cosmic order of life and death—of beauty and decay, of life's fecundity and fragility. Notice, though, that these burial practices not only do this sort of honoring, they actually supply the meaning to death. Death on its own, without the interpretation provided by our rituals and care, simply is the brutal fact of a stark and empty end. In our practices, we provide meaning to death. We locate the dead in a cosmic order. We mark the dead with signs of life—like the flowers on a casket or a grave.

In Holy Week, we gather to mourn the death of our friend. It's worth remembering that this set of liturgical practices over these few days is really very much like a funeral, not a flagellation. Confusing mourning and guilt is understandable. Lent is a season of penance and introspection. But what if our fasting is as much about conforming ourselves to Christ's death as it is about ridding ourselves of our sins? What if the absence of life-sustaining goods is a ritualistic conforming of our bodies to the absence of Christ? We cannot eat because Christ's absence overwhelms us.

Think about the oddity of what we're doing. 2000 years removed from the brutal events of the crucifixion of Jesus—someone we never even knew in his earthly life—we order our common life, our entire year around his death and resurrection. We gather to remember, to commemorate, to memorialize, to honor—to partake in it. What is shocking, astounding—the good news at the heart of the gospel—is that in his death, Christ locates our life in a cosmic order.

Our burial rituals are part of what makes us human, but in them we are providing or imposing meaning on death from within the world of life. But the ritual of Holy Week—the institution of the Last Supper, which we receive from the Lord himself—this ritual imposes meaning on life from within death itself. This is why we eat Christ's body and drink Christ's blood and mark ourselves with the sign of the instrument of Christ death, or sometimes even wear it as jewelry. Because, where flowers symbolizing life on a grave will shortly die themselves, the sign of death upon our bodies, and body of our risen Lord within ourselves, is our eternal life.

*Dr. Dallas Gingles
Associate Professor of Practice
in Systematic Theology & Christian Ethics
Perkins School of Theology*

Gracious God, the raiser of the Sun, setter of the moon, Lord of the Sabbath, you have given us the gift of time. Forgive us for the ways we fail to honor this gift, and all that you offer us. Teach us to honor the time that we keep.

Good Friday, March 29th

Throughout their time with him, Jesus told the disciples that his death was coming. I wonder if they felt prepared when the time actually came. I suspect not. They preached about the hope found in Jesus and the coming Kingdom of God but even Peter could not face the reality of the how it might come about. Often times, our leaders and teachers are the worst adherents of their instructions and teachings.

As we landed on our theme of rest and time for this year's devotional guide, I noted the irony in the back of my mind. I have spent much time and energy teaching students about rest, pace, and self-care in their lives. I've implored others to live healthy rhythms of life. I've preached about the necessity of Sabbath. However, I might be the worst student of my teachings. I don't prioritize time to rest during busy seasons of life, I stay up late into the evenings ignoring my body's cries for physical rest, and I perpetually find ways to fill my schedule with more things to do even when I know it is already too full to begin with. Too often, my actions reflect the lie that I am the sum of what I do. I fail to accept God's gift of time.

Do you think the disciples saw Jesus's death as a gift on that Good Friday so many years ago? Once again, I suspect not. Despite their time with Jesus and hearing Jesus's forewarnings, the disciples were not prepared for his death because they failed to understand the whole picture. They failed to see it as a gift. But Jesus gives it anyways. Like the disciples, I fail to understand the whole picture when it comes to God's gift of time. But God gives it anyways.

As I stand in solidarity with the disciples among our mutual failings, I am reminded that the season of Lent creates a rhythm for me each year in the way that Sabbath offers a rhythm for my weeks. Lent is a time to remember and repent every year. I am not meant to be perfect in my failure to consistently accept God's gift, but Lent reminds me to repent when I do. As you close out this season, what gifts from God have you failed to accept? How do you need to refocus and reorient your time? What is God inviting you to remember and repent? Whatever it might be for you, repent and receive God's gift. Easter is around the corner.

*Kaleb Loomis
Assistant Chaplain*

Gracious God, the raiser of the Sun, setter of the moon, Lord of the Sabbath, you have given us the gift of time. Forgive us for the ways we fail to honor this gift, and all that you offer us. Teach us to honor the time that we keep.

Saturday, March 30th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

Opening Invocation

Holy God, you are here. You are with me in the faces of friends and in the stillness of solitude. You, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer are here. May I be present now, even as you are present to me. Eternal Friend, this is my prayer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
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a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time to search and a time to give up,
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Reread the passage above. What time best describes your current season? Your current week?

Prayer for Others

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Christ be within to keep me, beside to guard me, before to lead me, behind to protect me, beneath to lead me, and above to bless me. Amen.

Happy Easter!

He has Risen!

Thank you for joining us in our reflections on the Time We Keep throughout this Lenten Season. We hope it has been one of rest and reflection. Lent ends with Easter Sunday, and the story of Easter is the story of God's redemptive work in a broken, imperfect world. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God incarnated, whose life and death demonstrated God's unconditional love to humanity. In Christ's resurrection, we learn that life is more powerful than death, that hope springs forth like the new dawn even after the darkest of nights.

We invite you to continue to use this guide in future. Whether we are in the season of Lent or not, we find ourselves navigating all sorts of times and seasons in life. Grace and Peace to you this Easter. We all can shout out, "He is risen. He is risen, indeed!"

Thank You

This guide could not have been completed without the hard work of all who contributed to it. We are grateful for those who wrote a devotional for this guide. Each contributor's name is listed at the end of the devotional. Special thanks go to two of our student workers, Raissa Umwali and Eunbyul "Stella" Cho, who helped review and craft this guide. We look forward to the ways that the Christian community at SMU will continue to offer shared expressions of our collective faith in the future.

Connect with the OCRL

Need to have a confidential conversation? Or simply interested in connecting with the Office of the Chaplain & Religious Life? See the contact information below to learn about all the ways you can get involved or receive support on campus.

General Email: chaplain@smu.edu

Phone: 214-768-4502

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