

## Introduction To This Guide

These daily devotions are provided to encourage you to listen and reflect on how God is speaking to you during this Season of Lent. The question at the end of each day's contemplation is intended to foster further reflection and prayer throughout the day. In addition, space is provided for you to document your thoughts on how you hear God speaking to you at this time. May you be blessed and transformed through the Holy Spirit as you ponder God's word during this most holy of seasons. ++ *Provided by:* Community Missions Inc., 1570 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, NY 14303, Phone: (716) 285-3403, [www.communitymissions.org](http://www.communitymissions.org)

### *Where Do I Begin?*

Begin each day with the Prayer of Illumination to help, prepare your heart to hear God's word for you. Read "to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information...Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed...Read as one awake, one waiting for the beloved. Read with reverence."

Let us Pray a *Prayer of Illumination*:

All-Seeing One, above me, around me, within me —  
**guide my vision as I engage with your sacred words.**  
Look down upon me, look out from within me, look all around me.  
**See through my eyes, hear through my ears, feel through my heart.**  
God of Wisdom, touch me where I need to be touched;  
and when my heart is touched, give me the grace to lay  
down this Holy Book and ask significant questions:

**Why has my heart been touched by you?**

**How am I to be changed through your touch?**

All-Seeing One, I need to change, I need to look a little more like You.

**May these sacred words change and transform me.**

Then I can meet You face to face...when I shall be healed forever.

Your Word and the touch of your Spirit bring healing...  
a healing that will last.

**O Eye of God, look not away.**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,**

**and put a new and right spirit within me. Amen.**

Adapted from *A Tree Full of Angels* by Macrina Wiederkehr [As quoted in *A Guide To Prayer For All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room]

## THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK - Day 23

### *FIRST: SEEK THE KINGDOM*

Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

### *STRIVE FOR THE KINGDOM*

Prior to this text Jesus warns against "storing up treasures on earth" and instructs us to "store up treasure in heaven." (6:19-20). Later on he says, "You cannot serve God and wealth." (6:24)

Elsewhere in the gospels Jesus says the kingdom is *near, here, and within us*. The kingdom is community; it is the beloved, peaceable kingdom where everyone is fed and clothed and no one goes without. It seems in our society that the kingdom of God is so far away that we can't even see it; and yet Jesus says it is near, and we must strive for it and meditate on it, because it is *within us*, within our grasp.

*Striving for the kingdom* means putting someone else's needs above our own. *Striving for the kingdom* means working for justice where

we see injustice; it means when we have two coats we give away one; it means buying groceries for our hungry neighbor; it means being a point of contact (using what influence and connections we have) to get someone a job so they can have stability and dignity of feeding their family. Our society is not set up to be the kingdom, but it could be—the kingdom is within us. We need to help bring it into being. We who call ourselves Christian must work to usher in the kingdom, one where people do not need to worry about clothing, or food, or shelter—a kingdom where a rescue mission *goes out of business* because no one is in need.

*PRAYER*

God of Justice, enable me to use the kingdom within me to usher in the kingdom here *on earth as it is in heaven*. Amen

*FOR FURTHER REFLECTION*

List one thing you can do to bring the kingdom of God near?

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Visit [www.HopeForNiagara.org](http://www.HopeForNiagara.org) for more spiritual resources.

# Lent 2022 - Day 23

## A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Return of the Prodigal, Rembrandt (1663-1669)

### THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK STRIVE FOR THE KINGDOM



This week's devotional resource was written by Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow, President of the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions, and edited by Rev. Mark H. Breese of Community Missions. The content was created specifically keeping in mind the populations served by Community Missions.

*REFERENCES AND RESOURCES*

Scripture Verses are from the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*. *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.  
Prayer of Illumination adapted from, *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 125.  
The choice of Daily Scripture texts are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.

<sup>1</sup>*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989, p. 2293

<sup>1</sup>Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup>Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992.

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