

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

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]

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK - Day 31

MESSIANIC RIDDLE

John 7:33-39

Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little while longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, "You will search for me and you will not find me" and "Where I am, you cannot come?"

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

PLAINLY SPEAKING...

Was Jesus intentionally being obscure? It seems to me when I read some of the things Jesus says, that Jesus expects those who listen to him to search beneath the surface for answers. It's almost like it's a private joke, where you have to know some background in order to understand. It is worth noting that already there is talk of a plot to kill Jesus.

The setting for this text is the Festival of Booths. This is a harvest festival that takes place in the fall of the year. *On the last day of the festival, the great day*, the 14th chapter of Zechariah is always read. It highlights the events of the day of the Lord's victory, "On that day *living waters shall flow* out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one." (Zechariah 14:8-9)

When Jesus puts out a call for the thirsty to come and drink; and proclaims *rivers of living water shall flow from the believer's heart*, the Jews in the crowd hear this as the reigning in of the kingdom of God

when there will be peace in Jerusalem. The implication here is that *Jesus* is the one chosen to reign it in.

And so there is disbelief and division among the people. In the next paragraph we see them begin to reason among themselves why this can't be so, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?" (John 7:41) And remember Nathaniel's question a few chapters previous, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth [of Galilee]?" (John 1:46) And so they continue to question if Jesus is the Messiah. Our own *believer's heart* knows that it is true.

PRAYER

Father God, please lend your understanding to the scripture set before us. In Your Son Jesus name we pray, Amen

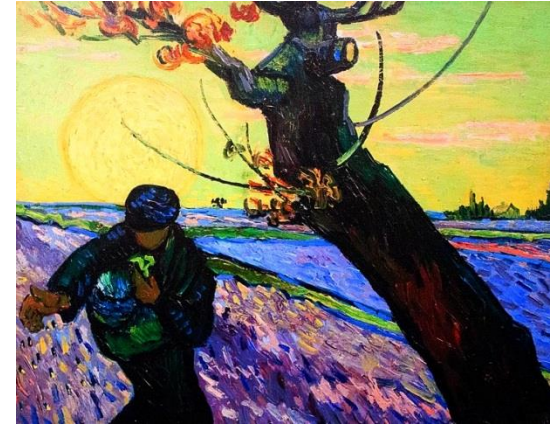
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

How do you explain "Jesus" from your *believer's heart*?

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Lent 2022 – Day 31

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sower With The Setting Sun, Vincent Van Gogh (1888)

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK PLAINLY SPEAKING...



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)*, HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.

The choice of Daily Scripture texts are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.

**One Day At A Time In Al-Anon*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia, 1996, pg. 368-369. [ISBN:0-910034-63-X Large Print]

**James C. Howell, *Servants, Misfits, and Martyrs*, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1999. Pg 26-28

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.