

Introduction
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]

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK - Day 36

GOD IS LOVE
1 John 4:7-12

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

WHY?

The text asks two questions: "What is Love?" and, "Why did God send his Son into the world?"

The answer to the first question is easy, "God is Love." The answer to the second question is harder, and is more multi-layered. "Why did God send his Son into the world?" In the letter John says, *God sent his only Son into the world so that we might LIVE through him. In this is love...* So there is LIFE in the Love of God, the Love that Jesus brings into the world. God sent his Beloved Son into the world to share God's Love, and to show us how to Love one another in LIFE. Jesus himself says, "I have come that they might have LIFE and have it abundantly!" (John 10:10)

But John also has a second answer to the question: "Why did God send his Son into the world?" *In this is Love, not that we loved God but that he Loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.* I am bothered the phrase *atoning sacrifice* because it make it sound like God sent his only Son to earth for the purpose of being put to death to substitute for our sin. But when I look at the Hebrew Scriptures and see the *sacrifice* that God *actually desires*, I see that: "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart;" (Psalm 51:17) "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" (1 Samuel 15:22) "Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor are your sacrifices pleasing to me..."

(Jeremiah 6:21) “But this is the command I give them, ‘Obey my voice and I will be your God, and you shall be my people, and walk only in the way that I command you...’” (Jeremiah 7:23) “Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:7-8)

Jesus was, indeed, *perfect* in God’s love—love lived out *sacrificially* in this way: so *if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

PRAYER

“Jesus, who has come that we may experience life in its fullest dimensions, give us now that life, and let it ever be in us a river rushing forth to life eternal. Through Christ Jesus.”^t Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Why do YOU believe “God sent his Son into the world”?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 - Day 36

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK WHY?



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.
- ^tInvocation, *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Shawchuck and Job, Upper Room Books, p. 137.
- ^{tt}Carlo Carretto, *In Search of the Beyond*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Shawchuck and Job, Upper Room Books, p. 138-9.
- ^{ttt}Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2006. From pgs. 2-4.
- ^{tttt}www.blueletterbible.org, *glorified*, using Strong’s Lexicon #G1392.

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