

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.

CONDEMNED AND REDEEMED

Luke 23:32, 39-43

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him...One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned

justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

MERCY AND GRACE

I have heard it said that the difference between mercy and grace is this: Mercy is getting what we don’t deserve, Grace is not getting what we do deserve.

The two criminals on either side of Jesus illustrate the good and evil in us all, and our potential for both condemnation and redemption. We are condemned and redeemed by the condition of our heart. Arrogance causes the first criminal to see his other two companions on the cross as equal to himself. But the second criminal sees his own unworthiness in the face of Jesus’ righteousness.

How can we explain matters of the heart? What makes one human being continue to belittle, and berate an innocent victim while at the same time, in the same circumstances, another is humbled and repents his own sins? What hardens the hearts of some people, and allows others to be softened into confession and repentance? I believe it is that difficult word *submission* that makes the difference. Some people will fight with all their might to not give in, but *submitting* to God allows for God’s grace to be manifest in us. Arrogance hinders submission. The Apostle Paul speaks to the sin of arrogance:

“To keep me from being too elated [boastful, arrogant] a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about

this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness’...Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecution, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) *Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*

PRAYER

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.”*** Allow your grace, O Lord, to enable me to submit to you in all decisions, and your mercy to envelope me when I stray. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name a time when giving in would have been better than holding out.

-----fold here -----
↓ front cover ↓
-----fold here -----

Lent 2022 – Day 45

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Entry into the City - John August Swanson

GOOD FRIDAY MERCY AND GRACE



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.
*Prayer, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 91.
**adapted from: For Courage to Do Justice #456, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.
***Ibid, Amazing. Grace #378, first verse.
****Prayer, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, p. 101.

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.