

Introduction To This Guide

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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]

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT - Day 33

LOSING AND KEEPING

John 12:24-32

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - "Father save me from this hour?" No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

ADMIRER OR DISCIPLE?

I read a story about Clarence Jordan and his experience founding Koinonia Farm - an intentional bi-racial community begun in the 1940's in Americus, Georgia. Clarence had this notion that blacks and whites could live together peaceably in community if given the opportunity. The deep south in the 1940's was not exactly ready for that. "The Ku Klux Klan repeatedly terrorized, bombed, and vandalized Koinonia,"** and businesses boycotted their produce.

"Jordan once asked his brother, Robert...to be Koinonia's attorney. "I can't do that. You know my political aspirations. I might lose my job, my house, everything I've got." Clarence said, "*We* might lose everything too." "It's different for you," Robert responded. "Why is it different?... You and I joined the church...as boys...when we came forward the preacher asked...'Do you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?' And I said, 'Yes.' What did you say?" Robert replied, "I follow Jesus, Clarence, up to a point." "Could that point be any chance be - the cross?" [Robert replies] "I follow him *to* the cross, but not *on* the cross. I'm not getting myself crucified."

Then Clarence tells him he's an "admirer" of Jesus, but not a disciple, and he should go tell *that* to his church. Robert replies that if everyone who feels like he does did that, "we wouldn't have a church..." But Clarence asks, "The question is, do you *have* a church?" (p. 28) His brother eventually did become their attorney, as well as a state senator and a justice on the state's Supreme Court; and he "boasted that his brother was the greatest Christian he had ever known."

Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

PRAYER

I need your strength and guidance Lord. Give me the courage to trust in your faithfulness, so that you can trust mine. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Do one thing just for Jesus today. How did it feel?

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Lent 2022 – Day 33

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT ADMIRER OR DISCIPLE?



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MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK - Day 34

FREE FOR ALL

Matthew 5:38-42

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

RISK LOVE

Have you ever thought of attachments as idols? Maybe you have four coats and never wear three of them anymore, but you just can't bear to part with even one—even though you see someone who clearly could use a warm coat.

Or maybe you feel like, because you worked hard for what you have, you don't have a responsibility to be generous to someone who was not able to work as hard as you. Or maybe your impulse to emotionally protect yourself above all else, keeps you from speaking up when you see an injustice—see someone else being treated unfairly.

The trouble is simple. We are often afraid to give of ourselves when there is a risk that you will not have enough later on—enough money, enough time, enough food, enough security, enough, enough energy.

Yet here is Jesus encouraging us: turn the other cheek, give more than you were asked to give, expend the extra energy even when it's hard, be generous to those in need. Living compassionately requires effort. Loving our neighbor sometimes even means giving up what we think is our due.

Jesus asks is that we love one another, and take action that shows we care; Jesus asks us to risk love.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help me to see the opportunities you put before me to serve you. Give me a creative spirit to work with those you put in my path and lead me in your way everlasting. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name a time when you took a risk to help someone in need.

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Lent 2022 – Day 34

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT
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TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK - Day 35

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 3:11-14, 16-18

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death... We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us - and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

TRUTH AND ACTION

From the beginning of all things, our text says, God's message is that we should live a life based on love. The text is actually trying to answer a very deep questions: What is *life* and how can we live it to the fullest? The text says, *We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another*. So living a full life depends on how we love *others* because Christ laid down his life because of his love for us.

And yet, the text also points out that sometimes as Christians we can get bogged down by seeing all the sad, hurtful, and even violent ways people treat each other. Sometimes we even see Christians act in these harmful and sinful ways, all the while claiming that they do it in the name of God. Sometimes we see all this hurt and hate in the world and it causes us to begin to hate as well. We are stung by what we see and experience and we find ourselves wanting to sting back!

What are we to do then, and how do we find our way back to what God has wanted us to hear from the beginning—that *we should love one another*?

This text from 1 John does not leave any middle ground: love your neighbor and help them. Do not hate, even when you see and experience things that are hateful. This text in 1 John asks the hard questions that we need to ask ourselves: "*How does God's love abide in anyone*

who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?" Then it gives us the clear, simple, and challenging answer: "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."

PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life. (St. Frances)

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Is there someone you *hate*? How can you serve that person in the love of the Christ?

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Lent 2022 – Day 35

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT *TRUTH AND ACTION*



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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”?

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Lent 2022 - Day 36

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

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PERFECT LOVE

1 John 4:17-21

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

TRUST LOVE

A word not mentioned in this text is trust, but trust is a very important component in love. To say you love without trusting the one you say you love, is to be in a constant state of fear. And, as John says, *there is no fear in love*. Trusting leaves us vulnerable to being hurt. But there is something worse than being hurt, and that is not risking love at all. For by risking love we place ourselves in a most wonderfully precarious position where we may receive the most precious gift - the gift of complete and total love by another, *perfect love that casts out fear*.

However, there is a possibility that we may be hurt, but being hurt actually can serve to tenderize us to be more compassionate and more loving. Being hurt lets us know that we are human; it can sensitize us to be more loving toward others - we can empathize - because we know how it feels to be hurt. Because we love our brothers and sisters, we do not want them to be afflicted with the pain that we have endured.

John says that *those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen*. I have heard that sentiment expressed in another way: You only love God as much as the person you love the least in this world.

And so we must ask ourselves, is that how much we want to love God, only as much as the person we love the least? Or do we want to surrender to God's love and *love because he first loved us*? Risk love, allow God's love to penetrate even the most hateful of feelings, obeying the commandment we have from him: *those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also*.

PRAYER

Let me trust in you enough, dear Lord, to risk loving my brother and sister even when I may be hurt in the process. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

When have you had to trust that loving was the best course of action?

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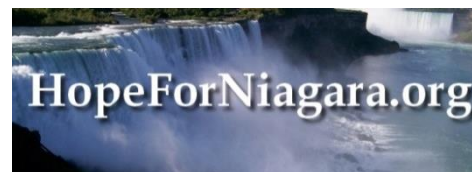
Lent 2022 – Day 37

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Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK TRUST LOVE



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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 FIFTH WEEK - Day 38

COMPASSION

Matthew 9:35-38

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

A MATTER OF THE HEART

As Jesus *went about all the cities and villages*, he was surrounded by people in need. I can only liken it to when I have been with my son and waited for his case manager to take him into her office, to reapply for social services. Seeing all the people in need: mothers with children, unkempt young men in shabby clothes, many with hygiene problems, some with addiction issues, some with mental health concerns, not knowing where to turn and hoping against hope that someone will help them get out of the mess that they find themselves in, many through no fault of their own. I see so much need and my heart actually hurts because I can't fix it, I don't know how to help, and I don't even know what WILL help.

Jesus sees that sometimes we are born into situations that make it hard for us to move forward in life. They don't make it *impossible*, but these situations make it harder for people to make ends meet, harder to have a sustainable life, harder to have a *good life* - whatever one perceives that to be.

Social Service agencies do help people with basic needs, but people need more. They need hope, they need to see a way beyond the help they need in the moment. Jesus sees them as *sheep without a shepherd*.

And so he sends out his disciples knowing the harvest is plentiful - people need the hope, faith, and love that only God can provide; but the workers - the disciples - you and me - the followers of Christ -

we are few. And so we pray for more help, we pray for *the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*

The *followers of Christs* are the means of providing for the community. People need a leg up, as much or more than they need a handout. Followers of Christ and their churches often provide food pantries, thrift stores and soup kitchens: but they could also provide mentors and counselors and people to *walk with* folks to help them get their lives together. In this way we share the love and compassion of the Christ. When we go into the fields and *be* the shepherd who leaves the 99 who are doing just fine to attend to the one who is lost and alone, we are being a laborer for Christ reaping in the harvest.

PRAYER

Lord, we know the harvest is plentiful. Send out laborers to reap in the abundant harvest of those who are lost and alone. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

When have you offered hope to someone who was hopeless?

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 38

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK A MATTER OF THE HEART



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.
- ¹Invocation, *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Shawchuck and Job, Upper Room Books, p. 137.
- ²Carlo 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.
- ³Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2006. From pgs. 2-4.
- ⁴www.blueletterbible.org, *glorified*, using Strong’s Lexicon #G1392.

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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.

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SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK - Day 39

SERVANT JUSTICE

Isaiah 42:1-4

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

JUSTICE UNDONE

Carlo Carretto - mystic, monk and author - shares passionately about his deep dependence on the Christ.⁴

"Jesus became a sacrament for me, the cause of my salvation, he brought my time in hell to an end, and put a stop to my inner disintegration. He washed me patiently in the waters of baptism, he filled me with the exhilarating joy of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, he nourished me with the bread of his word. Above all, he forgave me, he forgot everything, he did not even wish me to remember my past myself."

"When, through my tears, I began to tell him something of the years during which I betrayed him, he lovingly placed his hand over my mouth in order to silence me. His one concern was that I should muster courage enough to pick myself up again, to try and carry on walking in spite of my weakness, and to believe in his love in spite of my fears. But there was one thing he did, the value of which cannot be measured, something truly unbelievable, something only God could do."

"While I continued to have doubts about my own salvation, to tell him that my sins could not be forgiven, and that justice, too, had its rights, he appeared on the Cross before one Friday towards midday."

“I realized that he had died in order that I might stop turning to him with questions about justice [for my sins] and believe instead, deep within myself, that the scales had come down overflowing on the side of love, and that even though all...through unbelief or madness, had offended him, he had conquered forever, and drawn all things everlastingly to himself.”

PRAYER

May our own witness of your saving love mirror that of your faithful servant, Carlo Carretto; and may we know your just and forgiving love always. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Describe your own sacrament of salvation.

Visit www.HopeForNiagara.org for more spiritual resources.

Lent 2022 – Day 39

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Sermon on the Mount, Károly Ferenczy (1896)

SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK JUSTICE UNDONE



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