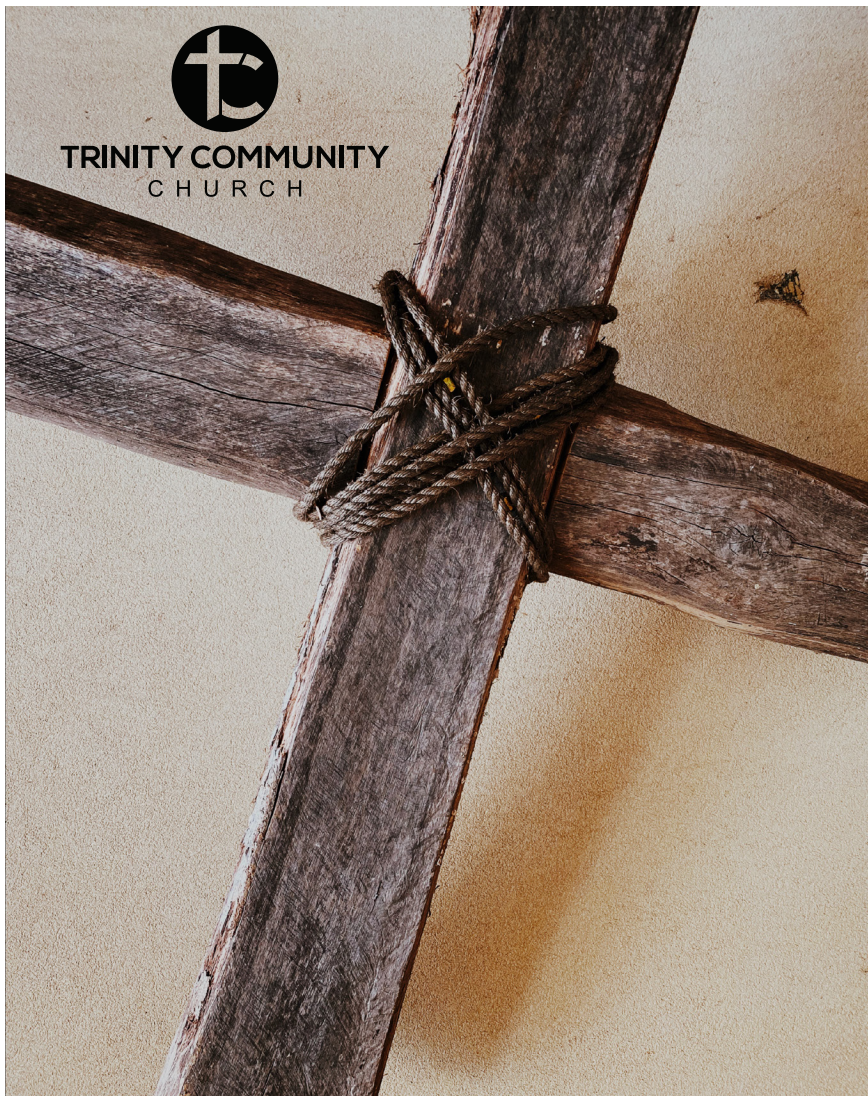




TRINITY COMMUNITY  
CHURCH



# LENT

*devotional*  
2022

# Lent at TCC

Trinity Community Church,

Lent is a season of the church year counting down to Good Friday. It is 40 days long, not counting the Sundays when the church gathers before God. Traditionally, it has been common for Christians to give something up during Lent, such as chocolate or TV. While such practices might have benefited someone somewhere, this seems to treat Lent as an arena for spiritual athleticism, as though deprivation is good for its own sake. Giving up food is no good if we will not give up our sin (Isaiah 58:1-8, Hosea 6:6).

Other Christians imagine Lent as a time to restrain our joy, perhaps to honor the pain of Christ. But as Christians, we know that what seemed an impossibly sad story had an impossibly happy outcome. Holy Saturday is followed by Easter, and the Lord never instructs his people to respond to salvation with sadness, even if it came at the cost of a lamb.

Instead, it's useful to think of Lent as a reminder of Matthew 16. In verses 13-20, Peter confesses the truth that Jesus is the long awaited ruler, the Christ. But in verses 21-23, Peter fails to realize just how exactly Christ is to rule: by a sacrificial death. And this act is to be not only the vehicle of salvation, but the shape of the Christian life itself (verses 24-28). The Kingdom that Jesus brings comes by his cross, and we respond by picking up ours.

Lent, at its best, is about being a disciple of the crucified King. It is a fixture in time in which we are reminded that "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance" (Martin Luther, The 95 Theses). We hope that during this season, we as a church can set aside time to take inventory and renew our faith in Christ.

What follows are different suggestions for use in prayer, one for each week of Lent. They are organized into two sections: "Repent" and "Believe." For the first three weeks we will take inventory of our sins and need for Christ. In the last three weeks we will remember Christ's Cross and Crown, in which we trust and by which we are saved. We encourage you to use these texts to guide your prayers before God, whether individually, in small groups, or for family worship.

If fasting is not already a regular part of your life, consider choosing one meal a week to skip, and instead use that time to lift up one of these prayers, knowing your church family is with you in it.

***May the Lord bless our church as we come to him in repentance and faith.***

-The Elders

# REPENT

## Week 1

3/2-3/8

### The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-21

The Ten Commandments summarize the Law of God. They reveal the principles that shape God's kingdom. Each command can be construed positively and negatively, both prohibiting one thing while implicitly endorsing another. For instance, the first command prohibits idolatry, and implicitly endorses the Shema, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The one who does the latter will automatically avoid the former.

Walk through each of the Ten Commandments and confess how you have fallen short in obedience. Suggestions to consider: One approach might be to meditate on two commandments a day for five days. Another approach is to read through Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21 on alternating days, praying for the Lord to open your eyes to any ways you could more fully embrace these commandments.

By the end of the week, identify one area in which you would like to grow in your obedience to God, based on your time in the Ten Commandments. Continue to lift this area of growth up to the Lord over the course of Lent.

## Week 2

3/9-3/15

### Psalms 51

This psalm is the prayer of David after he seduced Bathsheba and killed Uriah, her husband. David's sin was so great and his repentance so total that this poem came to be used for congregational use, modeling what it is to be low before God.

Let each stanza become a prayer prompt. It may go something like this:

**Verses 1-2**

Begin by remembering your need for God's grace.

**Verses 3-6**

Invite the Holy Spirit to convict you. Lift up your sin before God and reflect on how it is an offense against him. Perhaps this would be an opportunity to remember that particular area of growth you are hoping to develop during Lent. Lay this out before God.

**Verses 7-12**

What would it look like to be made holy in this area? Relate that in prayer to God and ask for his healing.

**Verses 13-17**

Praise God for the assurance of pardon that we have in Christ. He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion in Christ.

**Verses 18-19**

Pray not only for your own holiness, but for the holiness of God's people at TCC and abroad.

## **Week 3**

3/16-3/22

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

In this chapter we have one of the Servant Songs of Isaiah. The Servant of the Lord is a figure in Isaiah who is both an individual and a substitute for God's people. He is said to bring deliverance (Is. 42:1-9), gather the nations under God's kingdom (Is. 49:1-13), and do it while enduring unjust suffering (Is. 50:4-11). What the final Servant Song reveals is that this deliverer will do God's will not in spite of this suffering, but through it.

Spend some time reading through Isaiah 53. Prayerfully consider the sacrifice of Christ and the way that he acted as our substitute. Christ absorbed the debt of our sin and underwent the wrath of God so that we might not perish. On the basis of this sacrifice, our repentance is

not in vain. Christians go to their knees to repent, and never get back up, unsure if they are forgiven. As surely as Christ has died and Christ is risen, you stand before God free and clear.

Consider especially that Christ's sacrifice results in Christ's glory. He is the one who is able to stand in for us precisely because he is more than a mere human. He is the Lord, and for his sacrifice "he will divide the spoil with the strong." Lift up prayers of praise as you conclude your time, not only because Christ is the sacrifice, but because he is the victor.

# BELIEVE

## Week 4

3/23-3/29

Romans 3:21-26

Lectio Divina

Now we move from the "Repent" section to the "Believe" section. Our prayer times in the next three weeks will focus on placing our trust in Christ. By his Cross and his Crown we are saved.

This week, reflect on Romans 3:21-26. This is a dense passage, and there may be parts of it that are difficult to understand. Despite its complexity, the main point is clear: we are saved by Christ through faith, not works.

Take time to meditate on this passage. Perhaps you could make use of a practice known as Lectio Divina. This is essentially a way to engage the text which culminates in prayer. Lectio Divina takes place through four steps. You might do these in a neat succession, or they may overlap and interrupt each other.

1. **LECTIO:** Read the passage.
2. **MEDITATIO:** Meditate on the passage. In Christians terms, meditation is the act of mulling over the meaning of a text the way a cow chews cud. Take your time. Be curious. Pick things apart.

3. **ORATIO:** Pray using the passage as a springboard. Think aloud before God. Thank and praise him. Pour out your heart.
4. **CONTEMPLATIO:** In prayer, spend time contemplating the truths of this passage: the justice of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the grace poured out, the sufficiency of faith, the victory of the Cross.
5. **RESPOND:** We would add a fifth step, which is to identify how the Spirit may be prompting you to respond to this passage. This may be a time to return to the area of growth you are focusing on for Lent. Reflect on the forgiveness of your sins and remember that it is by faith alone that God's grace comes to you.

## Week 5

3/30-4/5

### The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

If last week we considered the promise of Christ's Cross, this week we consider the promise of his Crown. Some may read the Beatitudes as a kind of law code, describing virtues we are expected to embody. In that case, the Beatitudes may seem more appropriate in the "Repent" section. That might not be entirely off, but we think the Beatitudes exist, first and foremost, as good news.

The Gospel that Christ preached was the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). Christ came to launch the regime of God in the world. The reign of heaven has broken onto the earth. We are saved from our sins, yes, but we are saved for the kingdom.

Here in the Beatitudes, Jesus is making promises to those who stand to gain from the Kingdom. The poor in spirit will become rich, inheriting a kingdom. The mournful will find reason to laugh. Those who do not insist on their own way, the meek, will enjoy the wealth which normally belongs to those who do. Those who are hungry to see goodness prevail will be satisfied. Those who withhold vengeance will find themselves forgiven in turn. Those who abstain from worldly things will find that they had lost nothing in the exchange, but receive the fullness of God. Those who choose peace will enjoy peace in the family of God. And those who are persecuted will be vindicated in the end. We trust Christ for forgiveness, and we trust him to usher in this kind of

kingdom. Walk through the Beatitudes in prayer, praying “that God’s kingdom would come,” and thanking him that his will be the kingdom for which there is no end.

## **Week 6**

4/6-4/14

### Revelation 5

One of the paradoxes of the life of Christ is that what Christ’s persecutors thought to be mockery, God counted as true. When they pressed the crown of thorns into his head, they thought it was sarcastic, but it was at that moment that Christ was coronated. The sign above his head read “King of the Jews,” and only Jesus knew it to be true. The rule of God was revealed, climactically, in the death of Christ.

Here we have the same principle, but what was once hidden is now unmistakably and exultantly obvious. The king on the throne is both the regal Lion of Judah and the sacrificial Lamb of God, a substitute on our behalf. It is in Christ’s sacrifice that he proves he is worthy.

This week, remember in prayer that the Cross is not the defeat of God, but his overwhelming victory. Join with the four living creatures, the elders and the saints in lifting up his praise as you enter into Holy Week. Perhaps take time to reflect on your area of growth. How has God developed you in that? Reflect that the limited progress we experience now will one day be made total in the presence of the Lamb who reigns.



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