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YEARS A, B, & C

Mindful *Meditations*

for
*Every Day
of Lent
and
Easter*

Rev. Warren J. Savage



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Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:12–18

Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 12–13, 14, 17

2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new
and right spirit within me.

PSALM 51:10

Reflection: Once a year we need to get a physical examination to make sure we are healthy. Once a year we are supposed to get our teeth cleaned. It is recommended that every three to five thousand miles we should change the oil and filter in our cars and rotate the tires.

Most people wake up each day, refresh their bodies with a shower or bath, put on clean clothes, and face the challenges of the day. Some people treat themselves to a wonderful body massage, a nice manicure, and a pedicure. Others register at a health fitness center to exercise their bodies, getting advice from a trainer on how to stay toned and in shape. There seems to be a great deal of focus and concentration on outward

physical appearances. Do we give as much attention and care to our inner, spiritual life?

Taking care of our bodies is very important, but taking care of our heart and soul is perhaps more important because our true nature comes from within us. Lent is a time for us to examine our inner life and our hearts, where the true self resides. It is a time to check in on our relationship with God. It is a time for us to take a deeper look at the things that impede our ability to show love, care, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness to others. Lent is the time to ask God to help us to create a clean heart and reorder our lives with a right spirit, a steadfast spirit of love and concern for the whole world.

Ponder: What do I plan to work on during Lent?

Prayer: Lord, create in me a clean heart and instill within me your spirit of love and peace.

Practice: Today I will pray for a change of heart; I will fast from being narcissistic; I will make time for personal prayer and meditation.

Thursday After Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4, 6

Luke 9:22–25

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

LUKE 9:23

Reflection: Before we begin to do our inner work, we need to dethrone ourselves from being the center of the world. We are so used to being self-centered, self-focused, or self-absorbed. The only person we see is the one standing in the center. In the early days of Lent, we are challenged to let go of being in control, of wanting all the attention, and of seeking after short-term relief from our unhappiness with ourselves and life.

When we allow God to be the center of our lives, we are able to see ourselves in a different light. In God's light we can see our inner beauty and goodness. We can see that being in right relationship with God keeps us happy and whole. Our daily cross or struggle is staying

in right relationship with God. There are many voices coming into our heads telling us that we don't need God. There are strong forces all around us enticing us with material things and promises of wealth, power, and control to make ourselves the center of the world.

It is not easy to be a follower of the humble Christ, who calls us to let go of everything so that we can find our true humanity and true happiness. As the journey of Lent begins, we are invited to let Christ be the center of our world and to sit in the light of his Word, seeking wisdom for the days ahead.

Ponder: What is my daily cross?

Prayer: Lord, you are the center of my life. Give me a trusting heart to remain faithful to you and myself in times of self-doubt and personal struggles.

Practice: Today I will pray for a spirit of trust; I will fast from self-doubt; I will dedicate some of my time and resources to a project for the poor.

Friday After Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1–9a

Psalms 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 18–19

Matthew 9:14–15

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

ISAIAH 58:6–7

Reflection: Our lives move at express-train speed, passing by all the problems of the world, without time to reflect on how we are all connected and need to help one another. There are many public prophets calling our attention to the needs of others, but we choose to hide ourselves from our own; we refuse to tap into the wellspring of God's mercy and compassion in our hearts. Lent is a time to listen to the voices of prophets around us, the ones dedicated to doing the works of

mercy not for self-recognition, but for the sake of God and the good of humanity. God does not expect us to be the saviors, but God does desire that we do what is right, good, and just, that we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and incarcerated, and show the mercy and compassion of God to all people. Through these acts of mercy and compassion, we show others what it means to be in right relationship with God and our neighbor.

Ponder: How do I show God's mercy and compassion to others?

Prayer: Lord, you are the mercy and compassion of God in the world. Soften my heart to be more sensitive to the needs of others.

Practice: Today I will pray for mercy and compassion; I will fast from being inconsiderate; I will commit to doing a work of mercy.

Saturday After Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:9b-14

Psalms 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Luke 5:27-32

[Jesus] went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

LUKE 5:27

Reflection: Levi is completely consumed by his work as a tax collector; sitting at the tax booth defines his existence and purpose in life. Levi is a symbol of someone who is "attached" or "joined" to something that gives him or her a sense of security and purpose in life. In general, most of us are preoccupied with something. We are attached to things and situations that consume our attention and give us a sense of security, purpose, and delight. Lent presents us with another important challenge: to examine our attachments in life. Are we so "attached" or "joined" to the things of this world that we have no time, space, or ability to be with the triune

God? Levi must have re-examined his life and decided to detach himself from the tax booth and everything else that consumed his life to be with Jesus. Following Jesus demands personal sacrifice and detachment from things and situations that paralyze our ability to follow Jesus with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength. Jesus still walks toward us, sees us preoccupied with something, and offers us an invitation: “Follow me.”

Ponder: What am I afraid to let go of to follow Jesus?

Prayer: Lord, you call me by name and invite me to be your disciple. Give me a courageous heart to leave everything and follow you.

Practice: Today I will pray for strength; I will fast from fear; I will make a personal inventory and give up something for Lent.

First Sunday of Lent

YEAR A

Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7

Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6, 12–13, 17

Romans 5:12–19

Matthew 4:1–11

Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

GENESIS 2:7

Reflection: Life would be so much easier if we did not try to rewrite the story and play the part of God, pretending that we are the ones who control the universe, and can do whatever we like with this life, taking all matters into our own hands. How easy it is to forget that the “breath of life” is a gift from God given to every living creature on this earth. It was God’s plan in the beginning that every living being be connected by the breath of love, peace, and compassion. God’s “breath of

life” created a communion of life and a universal family of people from different races, traditions, cultures, social backgrounds, and ways of life.

In our unawareness, we can be tempted to disregard the truth that every living being breathes in and out the divine life of God, and to show a lack of concern for others by our words and actions. Wherever the journey of life takes us, we must remember that we were created to be humble servants of God and to breathe out love, peace, and compassion into the world.

Ponder: How do I enhance or diminish the gift of life from God?

Prayer: Lord, deepen my awareness of and respect for your presence in creation and in the people around me.

Practice: Today I will pray for a deeper love and respect for life; I will fast from self-righteousness; I will offer my time, talent, and treasure to a local organization that provides help to the poor and needy.

Year B

Genesis 9:8–15

Psalms 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9

1 Peter 3:18–22

Mark 1:12–15

God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations. I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

GENESIS 9:12–13

Reflection: God takes the initiative to enter into a covenant with humanity, with every living creature, and with the earth. In this covenant, God promises to be faithful to us, love us, watch over us, and care for us. In this covenant, we promise to be faithful, loving partners with God. The covenant simply reminds us that we are always in relationship with God, each other, and the earth.

We break covenant when we ignore our relationship with God and try to make progress in life without ac-

knowledging God as the source and foundation of our lives. We break covenant when we refuse to love our brothers and sisters and show compassion to those who are poor, oppressed, suffering, and in pain. We break covenant when we exploit the resources of the earth to satisfy our greedy tendencies, pollute the air and water, and destroy the environment.

It is time to take another look at the covenant we have with God, with humanity, and with the earth. It is time for us to recommit as an individual and a community to spending quality time with God in prayer and meditation, to being more compassionate to the needs and concerns of others, and to being more attentive to the ways we use the earth and its resources.

Ponder: What does it mean to live a covenantal life?

Prayer: Lord, strengthen my resolve to be faithful to your covenant of love and be more compassionate and generous toward all people.

Practice: Today I will pray for understanding; I will fast from selfishness and self-centeredness; I will spend time doing community service and advocating for care for creation.

Year C

Deuteronomy 26:4–10

Psalm 91:1–2, 10–11, 12–13, 14–15

Romans 10:8–13

Luke 4:1–13

When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.

DEUTERONOMY 26:6–7

Reflection: From the beginning of time, human beings have hurt other human beings by taking advantage of the weak. Throughout human civilization, individuals, and groups of people have been deaf to the cry of the poor, blind to the evil of slavery, and detached from the pain and suffering inflicted by others. Who will hear the voices of the men, women, and children from all over the globe who are forced into unpaid labor, sexual servitude, or coerced prostitution? An estimated 800,000 to 900,000 people worldwide each year

fall victim to human trafficking, the new slavery of the twenty-first century.

No one is created to be exploited or taken advantage of because of deplorable living conditions. As children of God, we have an obligation to defend the dignity of every human person and seek ways to protect innocent victims from inhumane practices such as human trafficking. We are the presence of God's compassion in the world today.

Just as God heard the voices of the Israelites in Egypt—a place of slavery and oppression—and saw their suffering, their forced labor, and oppression, we, too, must hear the voices of the people who are recruited, transported, transferred, and harbored for the purpose of exploitation.

Ponder: How do I become an advocate for human rights?

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to accept the painful, ugly realities of life and become your advocate of truth and justice in the world.

Practice: Today I will pray for a sense of justice; I will fast from complacency; I will become familiar with options for charity and advocacy regarding the trafficking of persons.

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