

Lenten Prayers

ASH WEDNESDAY & WEEK ONE

February 25–March 7, 2009

SCRIPTURE

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.”

–Mark 1:15

What does it mean that the kingdom of God has come near? Jesus proclaimed these words in order to signal that God was doing amazing things in their midst. The story continues today. The real story of our lives is not about everything we have accomplished. The real story is that God is doing amazing things among us—and sometimes lets us know so we can do our small part. When we recognize the movement of God in the world, it causes us to repent. That is, we redirect our steps in order to get in step with the Spirit and put our trust in this radically good news.

PRAYER

God, open our eyes to the ways and places where you are at work in this world. Then let us redirect our steps to move in concert with your Spirit. We give you thanks that you are doing amazing things in our midst. Amen.

FAITH AND ACTION

The real story of our lives is not about how hard we work to make things better. It is that we participate somehow in God’s amazing redemption story. God compels us to get in step with God’s Spirit at work through ministries like One Great Hour of Sharing. When those who are hungry are fed and those who were in despair have found hope, truly, the kingdom of God has come near!

Lenten Prayers

WEEK TWO

March 8–14, 2009

SCRIPTURE

“For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?”

–Mark 8:36

This past year we have heard too often about ungodly profit margins, corporate collapse, and bailouts. None of it makes sense. According to the teachings of Christ, it certainly didn’t make sense to chase after all the wealth of this world and lose one’s soul. Indeed, Jesus said those who are willing to lose themselves in the sake of the gospel would be the very ones who come to find true life as only God can offer. When we choose even the smallest sacrifice for the sake of the gospel, we taste of the eternal life that is offered in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

Lord, show us the way to eternal life even in the choices we make this day. Guard us against the lure of temporal profits that do not lead to life. Give us courage to lose ourselves in your purposes that we may be found in you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

FAITH AND ACTION

The church is perhaps the only long-standing institution that exists for the purpose of giving itself away! The partners working with the staff of One Great Hour of Sharing are dedicated to eradicating hunger and its causes, bringing help to those whose lives have been devastated by disasters, and providing new ways to live with dignity and hope.

Lenten Prayers

WEEK THREE

March 15–21, 2009

SCRIPTURE

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

–Psalm 19:14

Meditation is an ancient, tested, and true spiritual practice. In Psalm 19, words and meditation are the culmination of experiencing God’s revelation in the glory of creation and the instruction of the “law” or scriptures. That is, all that we experience of the mystery and magnificence of God leads us to humble testimony and contemplative thoughtfulness. Francis of Assisi said it well: “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary use words.” May our testimony and thoughtfulness give evidence to all that we have experienced of God’s wondrous love.

PRAYER

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

FAITH AND ACTION

Few things that we do day-to-day actually change the world. But when we give to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, individual lives, families, and whole communities are transformed for years to come. A family in Cameroon is no longer hungry, and their son now attends school. A church destroyed by flood in the Gulf Coast is rebuilt. And the world is changed. God has done great things and we are in awe.

Lenten Prayers

WEEK FOUR

March 22–28, 2009

SCRIPTURE

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

–John 3:17

Our world is in need of rescue. Our lives and patterns of living need their own share of deliverance. There is hope! God did not send Christ simply in order to show us our failures. The purpose of the Christian faith is the real possibility that we can be saved from self-destruction to a new quality of living in the context of eternal life—beginning now! We demonstrate God’s rescue mission by the words we share, the choices we make, and the actions we undertake.

PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you that you did not leave us to our own devices, but sent us your Son in order that we could be rescued to a new way of living into eternal life. Guide us to demonstrate a new quality of life in the way that we live out this day. Amen.

FAITH AND ACTION

We could ignore the problems and go on with our lives as if nothing were wrong. But God compels us to get in step with God’s Spirit that reaches out in love to those whose lives cry out for rescue. The work carried out by your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing demonstrate the kind of love that chooses not to condemn the world, but to offer life in Jesus’ name.

Lenten Prayers

WEEK FIVE

March 29–April 4, 2009

SCRIPTURE

Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

–John 12:26

Belief in Christ is a full-body experience. That is, what we decide in our hearts and minds takes on life through our actions and everyday decisions. Jesus said those who would serve him must follow him. Their lives and values reflect the places he would go and do the things he would do. We pray best when we are ready to be God’s answer to our prayers. When we cannot be everywhere where there are needs, we can find ways to support one another as we each do our own part.

PRAYER

Loving God, lead us to those places you would go. Teach us to serve where your Spirit is at work. And in times and places where we cannot go, help us to support the work your people are doing in your name. Amen.

FAITH AND ACTION

Even when we cannot physically be in all the places we believe Christ would be at work healing the world, we can participate in that work through the generosity of our treasure. Gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing go to the places Jesus would go, serving the least and the lonely.

Lenten Prayers

HOLY WEEK

April 5–11, 2009

SCRIPTURE

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
–Mark 15:34

Jesus’ words upon the cross are chilling and may refer to the opening lines of Psalm 22. Regardless of their source, Jesus’ words remind us that there are times and circumstances in this life when we seek God’s presence despite the lack of immediate indicators of God’s care. In a sense, Jesus has given us permission to say “my God” and “forsaken” in the same breath. This, too, is ultimately good news for God’s people.

PRAYER

God, when life hides from us all evidence of your presence and love, we still cry out to you. We thank you for Jesus’ example; that we can, in fact, dare to say “my God” and “forsaken” in the same breath. Be with all those whose circumstance leads them to believe they have been forsaken. Amen.

FAITH AND ACTION

There are places in this world where you and I cannot go. There are situations and moments where God’s love and presence are desperately needed, but we cannot be there. Yet, we are present in our support of those ministries that reach into corners of the world where we would never imagine going. Through the work of One Great Hour of Sharing, countless people know that God is with them—even when they feel forsaken.

Prayers

FOR EASTER

April 12–18, 2009

SCRIPTURE

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

–John 20:15

On the day of Christ’s resurrection, Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. She could not imagine or comprehend the amazing thing that God had done. Her understanding and expectations could only perceive the tragedy of the moment. Yet, God had changed the course of history and raised Jesus from the dead! There are times in our lives when it is appropriate to mourn the sense of tragedy we perceive. At those times, everything we see points to the conclusion that all is lost. Yet, God is at work in this world and in all that is unseen—bringing new life even amid death and destruction.

PRAYER

God, shape us into an Easter people who authentically mourn tragedy but are open to the possibility of new life in Christ. Amen.

FAITH AND ACTION

Gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing address challenges as vast as responding to the global food crisis and opportunities as intimate as recovering a treasured photo album from a family’s home destroyed by a storm. God’s love is made real in ways that change people’s lives.

Lent is a season of reflection, often associated with fasting and prayer. It is a time to take stock of our lives in light of Christ’s life given for us.

Use this as a guide for Lenten prayers in your home, at meals, or at some other regular time of day.

Directions: Fold the paper into a triangular cylinder and stand it on end. Hold it in place with a paper clip. Use one panel for each of the weeks of Lent, turning it and refolding it as Lent progresses.

