

grace
unbounded

DEVOTIONS FOR LENT
2022



AUGSBURG FORTRESS

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Welcome

Grace Unbounded provides daily devotions for each day from Ash Wednesday to the Resurrection of Our Lord/Vigil of Easter (traditionally known as Holy Saturday). Devotions begin with an evocative image and a brief passage from the Gospel of Luke (the gospel focus for 2022, year C in the Revised Common Lectionary). The writers then bring their unique voices and pastoral wisdom to the texts with quotations to ponder, reflections, and prayers.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus reaches out to all kinds of people. He proclaims good news—in particular, to those experiencing poverty, oppression, or captivity. He responds to those who want healing, welcomes time with children, shows great regard for women, shares meals with “unsavory” characters, and seeks out people who have lost their way. No limits, no restrictions, no boundaries—not even death—can stop Christ's love and grace for all people.

May the Spirit empower us each day to love God, and to love one another as God has loved us—with grace unbounded!

Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

—“Love divine, all loves excelling,” ELW 631



March 11

Luke 7:14-17

[Jesus] came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, rise!” The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen among us!” and “God has looked favorably on his people!” This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

To ponder

I confess that I too used to be embarrassed by talk about heaven and an afterlife. It seemed a cop-out, a crutch. . . . But I've changed over the years, mainly as I've watched people die. What kind of

God would be satisfied forever with a world like this one, laden with suffering and death?—Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?*

The last word

Although this story resonates with other prophetic miracles in scripture (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37), in Luke's gospel this is the first time Jesus raises the dead. Risking ritual defilement, Jesus stops the funeral procession by touching the bier. More remarkably, he speaks just four, brief words (in Greek)—and in doing so raises life out of death.

This story is not a random incident. It shows us a Jesus who will not stand idly by at a funeral. It shows us a God who will not let death have the last word.

What if Jesus did something similar at the next funeral you attend, . . . the next loss in your life, . . . the next community tragedy? Jesus came not simply to teach and welcome. He came to raise the dead. He comes to do the same for you—in and beyond this earthly life.

In Lent, we travel to the cross with One who will make sure that death does not have the final word.

Prayer

God who raised our Lord Jesus, by your Spirit raise new life in us and around us today, tomorrow, and forevermore. Amen.



March 28

Luke 15:20-24

“So [the younger son] set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.”

To ponder

Our capacity to forgive always allows us to be in touch with our own agency. . . . Without agency we collapse into passivity, inertia, depression, and despair.—bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*

The capacity to forgive

These are the actions of a rich man: people are given orders; fine clothes are presented, along with a beautiful ring; a feast is prepared.

What about the rest of us? What does this story inspire us to do when we celebrate the return of someone we love? Consider the joyful emotions displayed by family and friends of innocent people who win their battle to be released from prison. Remember the spontaneous revelry around COVID-19 hospital patients who recovered and went home.

How remarkable it is when those who have been unfairly made to suffer choose to publicly renounce their feelings of anger and bitterness. Their poignant expressions of forgiveness are remarkable signs of grace unbounded at work.

Prayer

God of grace, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Set us free to live new lives as you fill our stories with the light of your love. Amen.