

Lenten Spiritual Exercises

Notes:

Wednesday, February 17—
Saturday, April 3, 2021



These Lenten Spiritual Exercises were created by:

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And

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St. Andrew's Hespeler Presbyterian Church

First Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 21, 2021

Genesis 9:8-17

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹"As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹²God 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: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." ¹⁷God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Explanation: The rainbow appears in Genesis in the form of God laying down his warbow. God has just tried to solve a problem (violence) by using a violent flood. But God wisely recognizes that this approach has failed and so lays down his bow, vowing not to take that approach again.

Our exercise: to look at the unproductive and even problem-causing approaches we take to our problems and to vow to "lay them down."

Our craft: this week we will make a Rainbow/bow suncatcher. In our Sunday devotion we will take the opportunity to ceremonially lay down our rainbows, asking God's help to make the changes we need.

Sixth Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 28, 2021

Mark 11:1-11

¹¹When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" ¹¹Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Explanation: Palms were the symbol of the last independent Jewish kingdom – before the Romans took over. The crowds may have taken the palms as a symbol of hope for independence, but they then laid them before Jesus, essentially offering their hopes up to him, trusting him to take them to the best outcome.

Exercise: What hope or dream have you been holding onto? Even if it is a good one, you need to lay it down before Jesus trusting that he can fulfill that dream (even if it is in surprising ways) in a way that honours you and God.

Our craft: this week we will tie coloured ribbons around our palm branches. In our Sunday devotion we will take the opportunity to lay down our palms in trust as we look to God for our salvation.

Third Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 7, 2021

John 2:13-22

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Explanation: Jesus' creation of a whip is a bit disturbing. While none of us would like to abuse people or animals (as a whip can be used to do) it is a powerful symbol of opposing things that are just plain wrong.

Exercise: What do you see in the world around you that you think God might be asking you to oppose. (Please think in terms of ideas, not individuals!)

Our Craft: this week we will create a beaded whip. You will be able to use this whip for a bookmark if you like. In our Sunday devotion we will ask ourselves what injustices we need to oppose (like Jesus with his whip) and ask God's help to take a stand where we need to.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Numbers 21:4-9

⁴From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea,^[a] to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous^[b] serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Explanation: Moses made the serpent to offer a focus for people who needed healing. We all have need to come to God for healing, not just in body but also in mind and spirit and in our relationships.

Exercise: What healing do you need? Look to Jesus for that healing today.

Our Craft: this week we will make a snake on a pole to remind us that all of us need God to help us heal. In our Sunday devotion we will ask God for healing and help in all the struggles we and the people we love are facing.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 21, 2021

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,^[a] says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Exercise: Jeremiah promised that we would be able to replace stale old written laws with a law written on our hearts. We would be able to replace the simple following of rules with an inclination to do the right thing with joy in our hearts.

Exercise: What is something that you have always done only because you are supposed to do it? Come to God and ask for the freedom to act according to a new heart inside you that allows you to joyfully do what is right (even if it may mean a new understanding of the written law).

Our craft: this week we will write on our hearts what we want to try to do joyfully. We will also decorate our hearts. In our Sunday devotion we will ask God for new hearts — hearts that set us free to become our very best selves.

Second Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Mark 8:31-38

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words^[b] in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Explanation: It must have been a bit of a shock for Jesus to bring up carrying a cross out of nowhere – remember he hadn’t been crucified yet, none of the associations we have with that were in place then.

Our exercise: What shocking thing do you think that Jesus might be asking you to do? Will you commit yourself to take up that cross?

Our Craft: this week we will make our own wooden crosses. In our Sunday devotion we will take up whatever cross Jesus may individually be calling on us to bear.