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On My Heart Imprint

Your Image



Lenten Devotions

March 12 - 17

On my heart imprint Your image,
Blessed Jesus, King of grace,
That life's riches, cares and pleasures
Never may Your work erase;
Let the clear inscription be:
Jesus crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope's foundation,
And my glory and salvation!

Lutheran Service Book 422

The Mount of Olives by Rev. Charles St-Onge

Stones Crying Out by Rev. Richard Gizynski

Washing Basins by Rev. A. Daniel Guagenti

The Strepitus by Rev. Matthew Brackman

The Crowing Rooster by Rev. Dr. Richard J. Serina, Jr.

Passover Herbs by Rev. A. Daniel Guagenti

March 12

The Mount of Olives

Read Mark 13:1-13



Since the time of David, and perhaps even before, the Mount of Olives has been a place of burial. Situated next to the oldest parts of Jerusalem, it was part retreat, part park, and part place for the bones of the ancestors of the people of Israel. There is something fitting about enjoying life in the presence of death; it puts things in perspective, and it helps us to remember that life's blue skies can be quickly followed by clouds of gray.

The disciples were excited at what they were seeing Jesus accomplish among the people. Sick-nesses were being cured, hungry people fed, and the dead were being raised. Surely things were only going to get better! The Mount of Olives was the perfect place for Jesus to set things straight. Far from getting better, things would soon get worse. Where it seemed like God was making things right, things for Jesus and His followers would soon go terribly wrong.

Except that Jesus' death would be followed soon after by His resurrection. After the events of Easter, the disciples could never walk through the graces of Mount Olive in the same way again. The promise that these bodies would rise was not just a hopeful belief. Now they had evidence of what that would be like because they had seen it happen to Jesus. They knew now that those who endured to the end would not lay under the Mount of Olives forever. They would rise again.

Next time you walk through or by a cemetery, think of the Mount of Olives and let no one lead you astray. These bones will rise. And those who die in Christ will live with Him forever.

By Rev. Charles St-Onge

We Pray

Gracious Lord, help me to not fear persecution or suffering, but instead trust in Your promise for deliverance, in Jesus' name, Amen.

March 17

Passover Herbs

Read Numbers 9:11



The Old Testament only prescribes that the Passover lamb be roasted with bitter herbs. Rabbinic traditions extended this simple detail into a full plate of six symbolic items.

Bitter herbs represent the strain of slavery. Herbs dipped into salt water represent tears. A mixture of apples, raisins, and nuts symbolize mortar for bricks.

After Jesus declared that the truth will set us free, they said to Him: "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone" (Jn 8:33). Jesus answered that everyone who sins is enslaved by sin.

Despite munching horseradish and dipping parsley in salt water for years, Jesus' contemporaries claimed they had never been enslaved. The rabbinic rite simply didn't make the connection. A moment of bitterness on the tongue can't convey the hopelessness of the day-in-and-day-out without freedom.

In the same way, we misunderstand being "sinners" if we think of sin as a handful of regrets. Being a sinner is a perpetual slavery, a separation from the God who is love.

That's why there's no legal fix to sin. We can't stop sin by crafting better laws, winning revolutions, overthrowing tyrants. We're enslaved to our own ugly hearts.

We needed a spotless Lamb of God to cover Himself in our bitter sins. We need the Lamb whom God had in mind when He set the Passover rite, our Lord Jesus. We have that Lamb, given in a meal without bitterness, for every tear will be wiped away.

By Rev. A. Daniel Guagenti

We Pray

"Lord, when Your glory I shall see / And taste Your kingdom's pleasure. Your blood my royal robe shall be, / My joy beyond all measure! / When I appear before Your throne, / Your righteousness shall be my crown; / With these I need not hide me. / And there, in garments richly wrought, / As Your own bride shall we be brought / To stand in joy beside you." Amen. (LSB 438)

March 16

THE CROWING ROOSTER

Read Matthew 26:69-75



Less than twelve hours—that was all it took for Peter to deny Jesus three times. On Thursday evening, sometime after dusk, Jesus and His disciples sat around the table of the Last Supper, and our Lord predicted His death. After dinner, on the way to Gethsemane, Jesus told the disciples they would all fall away from Him. Peter said he never would. Our Lord knew better and told him so.

Less than twelve hours—that was all it took. Three different times, someone asked Peter if he had been with Jesus. Each time, he denied it. Then, once that fateful rooster crowed, Peter looked eyes with Jesus and realized what he had done, and he wept.

Less than twelve hours—that was all it took. Jesus found His disciples asleep in the Garden. Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. The soldiers stripped Him, punched Him, and mocked Him. Peter denied Him. Jesus was left to face His fate alone.

Less than twelve hours—that was all it took for the sinless Son of God to go from looking into Peter's unfaithful eyes to dying upon those two blood-stained pieces of wood. Less than twelve hours after that rooster crowed, the sinless Son of God flung His head heavenward, prepared to breathe His last, and cried out, "It is finished." And it was. Thanks be to God.

By Rev. Dr. Richard J. Serina, Jr.

March 13

STONES CRYING OUT

Read Luke 19:39-40



As Jesus entered the city, the people cheered and shouted, proclaiming Him a king. This threatened the corrupt and comfy privilege and prestige of the religious leadership. They were supposed to lead the people in proclaiming God's mercy. Their voices should have been the loudest. But, with hearts hardened like stones, they couldn't and wouldn't see Jesus as the One who comes in the name of the Lord. They didn't want their boat rocked, so they tried to silence the truth.

Jesus' reply means that Good News cannot and will not be silenced. If the leaders wouldn't, and if the people didn't, shout for joy and broadcast the grace of God, then creation itself would take up pronouncing the glory of the Lord. Jesus uses the stones as a contrast to the cold and rigid souls of the leadership.

We call the Gospel the Good News. It is, in fact, the greatest news. Our Lord charged His church to go! We are to announce, broadcast, and in all ways declare the message of forgiveness and salvation that is ours in Christ Jesus. We are to be the voices shouting, "Hosanna in the highest!" so that the Lord might triumphantly process into the hearts and lives of a lost and broken world.

A sin-sick world and Satan would have us be silent. But Jesus broke sin and defeated Satan at the cross. He has overcome the world. He who is in us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is greater than he who is in the world. With the Word in our hearts and on our lips, we will never be silenced.

By Rev. Richard Gizynski

WE PRAY

Lord Jesus, by Your mercy enable me never to deny You, but to remain faithful to the end of my days. Amen.

WE PRAY

Dear Jesus, help me, motivated by Your love, always to proclaim Your grace. Amen.

March 14

Washing Basins

Read John 13:1-7



John takes several sentences to set the stage for Jesus washing His disciples' feet. First, we are reminded that it was the Passover, a celebration of national liberation from slavery. Second, John expresses that Jesus loved His disciples to the end. Third, we are reminded that Judas' betrayal was imminent and Jesus knew it. Fourth, John insists that Jesus knew all things were given into His hands by the Father. There's a lot going on here.

Jesus had all power and authority, but He was setting aside prestige to act as a servant. Jesus was about to suffer worldly defeat, but His victory was in loving those who would abandon and betray Him. The Passover celebrated release from slavery, but Jesus was acting as a slave.

All of this is found in how Jesus takes up and uses a washing basin.

Just a few hours later, Pontius Pilate took up a washing basin. Before Pilate stood a man with blood flowing from His head and back. Pilate did not take up the basin to wash those wounds. He washed his hands as a symbol that he would set aside his authority to allow the mob its desire for Jesus' blood.

These are two very different ways to give up authority. Jesus did so at personal cost. Pilate did so to protect himself from conflict or criticism. The water in Jesus' basin was dirty when Jesus was done, but His hands were holy. The water in Pilate's basin was clean, but he had blood on his hands.

This Lent, let us dispense with deceptive acts of self-justification. Let's find ourselves in serving others. "You are clean," our Lord insists. Knowing we are clean frees us to get our hands dirty as we share that holiness with others in need.

By Rev. A. Daniel Guagenti

We Pray

Thank You for washing us, Lord Jesus. Give us a measure of Your zeal to love as You love us. Amen.

March 15

The Strepitus

Read Mark 15:46

The strepitus is a loud noise at the end of Tenebrae, or the Service of Darkness, generally held on Good Friday. There is no single meaning for this symbol. Some connect the strepitus with the closing of the tomb, which will be the focus of this devotion. Others connect it to the earthquake or the Book of Law being closed.

Since becoming a pastor, because I am responsible for making the strepitus (which I do by aggressively shutting the sacristy door) while leading the service, I have not been startled by this loud noise. However, all of my previous years attending the service, I would jump a bit at the strepitus.

We should jump at the strepitus. We shouldn't jump just because we're startled. We should jump because of what the stone rolled in front of the tomb symbolizes. The loud boom a huge stone rolling over the opening of the grave was supposed to be the end. There was no escape, no coming back. Jesus was dead and buried. It was final.

Crucifixion did not stop Him. A spear in His side did not stop Him. Death did not stop Him. A two-ton stone did not keep Him in the grave. Another loud sound was when an angel descended and rolled this stone away—not so Jesus could walk out, but so everyone could see the empty tomb. Death was defeated. The grave is open. Death and the grave can no longer hold God's people. Dead and buried is now alive and will rise again.

By Rev. Matthew Brackman

We Pray

Lord Jesus Christ, thank You for entering into death and the grave in order to lead us out of death and into Your life. Grant us Your Holy Spirit so that we rejoice in the life we have and do not fear the grave, for it has no hold over us or the saints who have gone before us. Amen.