



LENTEN DEVOTION

“For the Son of Man
came not to be served
but to serve, and to give
his life a ransom for
many.”

Mark 10:45

2007
Saint Olaf College
Student Congregation

Introduction

This Lenten Devotion booklet is a compilation of individual devotions composed and submitted by members of the St. Olaf community. Students, faculty and staff of the community contributed individual devotions; they range from song lyrics to poems, personal experiences to analogous tales, and interpretations of biblical passages to personally authored prayers. Despite the various formats and literary styles, each piece offers words of meditation and reflection to encourage us in our Lenten journey, starting with Ash Wednesday and continuing through Easter Sunday. There are meditations for each day of the season. However, the devotions are not assigned to specific dates—they may be read in any order. The gospel readings are the readings for all five Sundays in Lent, Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. In conjunction with the gospel texts, the devotions are meant as a way to focus on the meaning of Christ's passion and our need for it. We, the Student Congregation and contributors to this booklet, hope this booklet will be a meaningful component of your Lenten season and that it will encourage reflection upon the central theme of Lent: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

St. Olaf Student Congregation Council

Psalm 51:1-18

Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
⁵Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

⁶You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.

¹⁷The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

¹⁸Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Entering Holy Ground

*When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
And Moses said, "Here I am."
"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."*

Exodus 3: 4-5

My knee-jerk reaction to these two verses is annoyance with God's tone of voice. The way he speaks to Moses, seems, well, demeaning. Granted, humans are sinful creatures and Moses already has murder on his rap sheet. But why did he have to take off his shoes?

But before protesting how shallow and inconsequential his sandals must be, I consider what shoes mean to us today. Holders of power—a boss, a CEO, a government official—never go barefoot. Not only do they always appear with shoes on, they're wearing nice shoes. Shoes can represent the crowd you run with, or how much money you have to spare. Women (and some men) wear heels to make themselves taller. To tell the truth, whenever we face the world as somebody, we wear shoes because we want to appear bigger than we really are.

The connotations of bare feet are quite different than shoes. Bare feet recall images of summertime, innocence, and children at play. Bare feet, for me, are about relaxing. I walk barefoot through the place where I live. When I kick off my shoes in a friend's room, it's because I feel safe there and am planning to stay awhile. I trust that I am in a place where I don't have to pretend to be someone.

So when God asks Moses to remove his sandals, I don't think God is emphasizing man's "unworthiness" to enter his presence. Rather, I see God asking Moses to throw off the symbol of his "worldly" self in order to enter God's presence as a trusting child.

Like Moses, we are preparing to enter God's presence during the season of Lent. Moses was a shepherd for 40 years. We wait for 40 days until Easter. At the end, Moses had to take off his shoes to enter God's presence. We are called to do the same. We often "fast" during the season of Lent to prepare ourselves for Easter and remove obstructions in our relationship with God. This Lenten season, consider what shoes you may need to take off, whether it be pride, personal ambitions or anything that the world has placed on you. When we fast from these things, we are becoming bare-footed. Then we are ready to stand on holy ground.

We can't earn our way into God's presence. That's exactly the point. It's not what we have or what we're wearing. God wants to speak to us exactly as we are, with nothing else attached...no shoes required.

Christina Koch '09

The Seed Cracked Open

Hafiz

It used to be
That when I would wake in the morning
I could with confidence say,
“What am ‘I’ going to
Do?”

That was before the seed
Cracked open.

Now I am certain:

There are two of us housed
In this body,

Doing the shopping together in the market and
Tickling each other
While fixing the evening’s food.

Now when I awake
All the internal instruments play the same music:

“God, what love-mischief can ‘We’ do
For the world
Today?”

Submitted by Merry Chadwick ‘07

Light

⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

John 1:4-9

I once thought that it was only my grandma who woke before sunrise to start coffee and quietly begin her day. This early, pre-dawn morning seemed to always be a mysterious time when I'd be asleep. The world is essentially silent, waiting for the hustle and bustle of life to begin again with the rays of the sun.

Lent is like this darkness. As the sun begins to rise, we can see the hope for a day beginning, but we are still in darkness. There is a distinctive sense of quiet—of waiting. We are anxious for the darkness to be over, and we are afraid of the insecurity it carries. Our fears and struggles seem more evident in the quiet stillness of the early morning, and these uncertainties can often occupy our worried minds. Nevertheless, if we take the time to enjoy the end of the darkness and the anticipation of the dawn, we can find joy and beauty in it as well. For darkness is not something to dread and fear, but simply an absence of light. We are free to question but also to remember the promise that the light will come again—through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Barring unforeseen cosmic consequences, this time comes and passes each and every day. The hope and light of sunrise always comes, and it is like this with Jesus. In Lent we wait, in darkness, for the joyful rays of sunshine to come on Easter morning. It is okay to be afraid and uncertain, and to question in the darkness, but know that the promise of light will come no matter what. Not even the struggle can overcome the true light of Christ Jesus.

Lord,

Help me in this dark time to be close to you. Hear the fears and struggles of my heart and guide me closer to you. Help me remember the promise of your light that will forever overcome the darkness, and give grace, love, and peace to all your creation. Be with us each day as we remember the hope of the promise to come, through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

Ryan Christensen '07

Luke 4:1-13

The Temptation of Jesus

⁴Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.'

⁴Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'

⁸Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'

⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", ¹¹and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."'

¹²Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." ' ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Peace

Anger:
On streets
In mouths
Through air

Death:
Next door
Down halls
Over seas

Despair:
In hearts
In minds
In voices

Do not let your hearts be troubled Believe in God believe also in me I will come again and will take you to myself I am the way the truth and the life You did not choose me but I chose you Love one another as I have loved you

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Peace.

Excerpts from John 14 and 15

Alex Carrier '09

A Prayer for an Uncertain World

Lord,
Give us the grace to open our eyes, minds, and hearts to what you shall show us today. Give us the grace to let what we touch change our hearts, souls, and minds to be more like your Son, Christ Jesus. Amen

Jeffrey Hyman '07

Pearls and Pilgrims

In Matthew, Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven as a pearl of great price worth everything one has (13:45-46). Perhaps this is the inspiration for the early Christian Hymn of the Pearl (second century).

The narrator of the hymn is a young person in his or her parents' castle, filled with treasure, light, and lovely clothes. One day, the parents, who happen to be the King and Queen, tell their child: "Go down to Egypt, fetch there the one great pearl from the ocean bed, kept by a fierce dragon. Then return to wear your fine robe and inherit our kingdom." The young person then adopts the appearance of a pilgrim, putting on a dusty cloak and makes his or her way to Egypt. The pilgrim finds the pearl and the monstrous dragon and then waits nearby for just the right moment to seize the pearl. But apparently, when you bide your time in Egypt, things can go quite badly: you forget who you are and fall into bondage. The parents learn of their child's sleepy, dangerous despair and write an epistle that arrives by a mighty bird. The King and Queen write: "Awake from sleep! Remember who you are. Recall the precious pearl and why you left for Egypt." The pilgrim yearned to be him or herself again: "My pure soul yearned and craved for its own likeness." Realizing his true nature and calling, the pilgrim puts a magic spell on the dragon, gets the pearl, and returns homeward to the blessing of being with God: "For I had found the pearl beyond price and would be with Him Eternally."

For some, this story may sound a bit too J.K. Rowling-ish (perhaps the pilgrim used Dumbledore's Full Body-Bind spell on the dragon? Was the mighty bird like Hedwig, Harry Potter's owl?), but the story offers at least three insights for Lent, and something more besides when thinking about Holy Week.

In terms of Lent, consider the following themes from the Hymn of the Pearl. First, the search for the Kingdom of Heaven involves movement, discernment, and adventure. Salvation is more like a dramatic quest involving enchantment and the bewitching of a dragon, than it is like staying in one place while memorizing a lesson or doctrine. Second, the Kingdom of Heaven is about a relationship. Dragons hoard treasures, not wishing anyone else to share in their solitary, envious treasure. When the young pilgrim at last gets the pearl, it is the occasion of great merriment and blessing being with others in a Kingdom. Third, a key to finding entry into the Kingdom of Heaven is recognizing your own identity, what truly matters to you. As part of this self-realization, one is to become aware that you yourself are precious, called to a royal homecoming. The spell of the pilgrim's forgetfulness and bondage is broken when he or she recognizes their true, precious value.

As we turn to think of Holy Week and Christ's own pilgrimage, consider re-picturing the Hymn of the Pearl not as a story of you and I as the pilgrim seeking the Kingdom of Heaven, but of Christ seeking you and I. In the incarnation, Christ leaves the Kingdom. Like the pilgrim, he puts off the robe of divine majesty and appears in the cloak of a poor pilgrim. Also, like the pilgrim, Christ faces problems of forgetfulness (he is denied by those who know him, Peter) in his struggle with a force that is far more terrible than any legendary dragon: namely, human sin and the power of death. Holy Week is the story of a quest to overcome sin and death in order to deliver a people out of bondage. On this re-telling of the Hymn of the Pearl, the value of the one rescued is at the center of the story. You are being sought by a savior set upon delivering you to the Kingdom of Heaven. You are the pearl of great price.

Charles Taliaferro
Professor of Philosophy

In the busy-ness of school and work, I too often find myself at a loss for time to spend with just Jesus and me. I'm worrying about earning high marks on homework when I should maybe be focusing a little more on my spiritual life. I'm so busy fussing over how I look to the outside world, how people see me, what they think about me, that I forget to spend time remembering that God loves me just the way I am. I'm so insecure in my daily living, wondering if my friends truly like me or if they're just putting up with me until I go away, that I neglect to pay attention to the voice of the One who never tires of my company, the One who so eagerly longs for the time when I'll return back in prayer.

I go to Church on Sunday, Bible study on Thursday, and I even work part-time at a Christian high school, but still the world has made me feel so far away. And so I pray...

Lord, I ask that You would move in my life again,
that You would speak to my heart, my soul
In these days of longing, Lord, I pray to feel Your close presence,
to hear Your voice clearly again
I pray, Lord, that You would help me tune out this noisy,
distracting world
That You would refocus my energy, my life,
into Your service once more
That You might fade away the intrusive pains from my past
And that You would give me the strength to change these mere words
into a new day, a renewed life
Amen.

Jeremy Gustafson '08

What is the point or meaning of Lent? There are many answers to this question, almost as many as there are members of the Christian Church, since Lent can be a very personal time. For some, Lent is a time of preparation for celebrating the saving power of Jesus as the Christ, for others it is a time to remember Jesus' sacrifice. It has become common to sacrifice something out of your own life to honor the sacrifice Jesus gave so long ago. This year, I have found a new reason, a new answer, to the opening question that I feel has meaning for the whole year.

The point of Lent for me is connected with remembering Jesus' suffering in a new way. Jesus' suffering means that he participated in the whole of human life. The divine, in whatever form it was found in Jesus, participated in suffering. Jesus, and by extension God, experienced suffering. Jesus has an understanding of pain, something a person wouldn't automatically assume of the divine.

This means that when I suffer, whether during Lent or any other season, Jesus understands what I'm going through. He is there with me, in all my suffering. He understands emotional pain from when he was abandoned by the disciples. He understands physical pain from the punishment he endured before and on the cross. This is something unique to Christianity. We believe the divine, in Jesus, experienced some of the suffering of humanity.

To my knowledge, no other religion believes this. We, as Christians, can be strengthened in the season of Lent by the knowledge that Jesus understands our pain, our suffering, our loss. We are not alone during the tough times in our lives. Not only does God stand beside us to give us strength, God understands what we are going through. And sometimes that understanding is what makes all the difference. God has been there, God knows it is hard, and God has made it through and will be with you as you struggle through this hard time.

Anne Hillman '07

See to it that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we first had.

Hebrews 3:12-13

I read a devotional once that talked about “arrhythmia of the soul.” In the devotional, the author described this as an experience when we sense something is not right in our soul. Perhaps our passion for pursuing Christ has decreased; or our joy in life has diminished; or our behaviors no longer reflect a commitment to Christ; or our prayers have become dry and few. I know it is in these moments that I feel spiritually dry, because I know that something just isn’t right within me.

I have learned that in those moments, before too much time has passed by and we lose the feeling that something is wrong within us, we must take action. If we wait too long, we will begin to believe that everything is fine in our lives when it really isn’t. We will begin to think that we don’t really need God. Arrhythmia of the soul, if ignored, will rob us of the full and complete spiritual life that God desires us to have.

I don't know what struggles you face, but I do know that we all face them. Whatever challenge you face today, let this prayer begin to put you on the path to overcoming the arrhythmia of your soul:

Lord, I thank You that You have equipped me with the Holy Spirit’s power to be an overcomer.. Teach me how to draw on Your strength and peace through prayer, so that I won't become doubtful or discouraged. Forgive me for my lack of passion in my pursuit of you, and for my thoughts, words and actions that do not reflect a commitment to you. Lord, remind me in the midst of troubles and spiritual dryness, that you are not finished writing my story and that you will use my circumstances to make me stronger and more reliant on You. Change my heart, Father. Search it and find any offensive way in me. Make me more into Your likeness. You are my Creator and my Maker. Rid me of the debris I collect, and my forgetfulness of my need for You. Come close in my times of spiritual dryness. Mold me, change me and continually make me new each day. Amen.

Jaclyn Loftsgaarden '07

I spent some time with a group in the Southern Alps of New Zealand when I was in High School. My group and I were taking a bus through the foothills of the mountains when we saw a blanket of white fluff covering the upcoming road. As we got closer, we were able to recognize that this sea of white was actually a herd of sheep that was beginning to come out of the valley towards the gravel road we were driving on. In New Zealand, the sheep population actually outnumbered the human population twelve to one, so this experience was not uncommon, but I distinctly remember almost a sense of fear as we saw more and more sheep emerge and begin to surround our vehicle. We couldn't move, and the sheep just stood there as if nothing was happening. Looking out our window, all we could see was a slight shuffling of white with little eyeballs.

In the distance, I remember seeing a boy slowly walk out from the valley. He was probably only about nine or ten, but he carried a staff and he calmly walked towards us. He had a gentle smile on his face when he realized that his flock had surrounded a bunch of American tourists, but he calmly lifted his staff and let out a slight holler towards the herd. The sheep looked up at him, and slowly, but surely, began to head forward towards the other side of the valley.

Jesus is this calm shepherd who leads us in the right way. Psalm 23 reads, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul." Jesus doesn't swoop down in a flash of light to help those crying out. Instead, he calmly leads the herd, in all of our troubles and tribulations, to calm waters where our souls can be revived. Even in these times of self-reflection and reverence, we can find a Jesus—who has suffered with us—leading us calmly, patiently, and with care. Lent becomes a time when we can humbly recognize this gift in all its glory. Christ's love and sacrifice are not about show or attention. Instead, they are about a calm peace that continues to sustain us and lead us to calm waters, in every moment of life.

Tyler Hauger '08

Luke 13:31-35

The Lament over Jerusalem

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, ‘Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.’

³²He said to them, ‘Go and tell that fox for me, “Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem.” ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”’

As my aunt's car rolled along through gentle hills I breathed slowly and spoke little. Words were too meager to satisfy the unfamiliar beauty that I was taking in. The road continued its winding, and I continued my curious gazing. I took in the alien majesty of the trees, the playfulness of the stream, the dignity of the mountains. This Maryland landscape was quite a sight for a small-town girl from western Iowa. The intricate interconnectedness, the earthy beauty, and the fruitful opportunity of this region left me awe-struck. It was nearly overwhelming. My eyes traced the foreign fence-lines and swallowed this dark, black road. I was beginning to feel truly far from home and wondered anxiously about the remainder of my internship. But then my eye caught a familiar something. A rustic telephone pole stood slanted at the side of the road. Who would have thought that there could be a steadying comfort in a telephone pole? I reflected as I stared at its plain details and rugged splinters. How could something so primitive bring such power? As my gaze reached the top of the pole, I smiled to myself as I realized I was staring at a modern cross. Perhaps, this "t" structure was the only logical form to support the way in which we speak to each other. Perhaps God chuckled as we humans chose this shape to sustain our lines of communication. Or perhaps, these polls offer an image of a profound message. Whether lining deserted country roads in Iowa or paved byways along the Potomac or the charming streets of Rice County; we communicate through these crosses. They bring us together. They offer both interconnectedness and power. *Strength and unity through the cross*—an intensely beautiful message God placed right in front of us.

As the road rolled along those few weeks ago, my eyes remained fixed on the hardy telephone pole. It was on that road and in that moment that I understood the message this rugged pole symbolized. God calls us to be caretakers, teachers, disciples, gardeners, and family; but how? Each of us can become all that God calls us to be. We can through the cross. Together, we can...when we communicate.

...that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

John 17:21-23

Brianna Schwenk '09

Interview with God

Anonymous

I dreamed I had an Interview with God.

“So you would like to interview me?” God asked.

“If you have the time,” I said.

God smiled.

“My time is eternity...

... what questions do you have in mind for me?”

“What surprises you most about humankind?”

God answered...

“That they get bored with childhood,

they rush to grow up,

and then long to be children again.”

“That they lose their health to make money...

and lose their money to restore their health.”

“That by thinking anxiously about the future,

they forget the present,

such that they live neither in the present nor the future.”

“That they live as if they will never die,

and die as though they had never lived.”

God’s hand took mine

And we were silent for awhile.

And then I asked,

“As a parent, what are some of life’s lessons you want your children to learn?”

“To learn they cannot make anyone love them.

All they can do is let themselves be loved.”

“To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others.”

“To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness.”

“To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in those they love,
and it can take many years to heal them.”

“To learn that a rich person is not one who has the most,
but is one who needs it the least.”

“To learn that there are people who love them dearly,
but simply do not yet know how to express or show their feelings.”

“To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it differently.”

“To learn that it is not enough that they forgive one another,
but they must also forgive themselves.”

“Thank you for your time,” I said humbly.

“Is there anything else you’d like your children to know?”

God smiled and said...

“Just know that I am here.”

“Always.”

Submitted by Linnea Johnson '08

Oddly enough, there was always a city block of clear weather on every side of her, a space just large enough that the casual passerby simply thought, “What an odd spot of calm,” and often even people who knew her well never quite put it together, as, after all, it’s not that unusual to have a break in a storm, though they’d develop, after awhile, an odd inclination to be with her without really thinking out why. Other than that, her life was neither better nor worse than most, except, of course, for the crowds.

Cole Swenson

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.

Matthew 8: 23-24

Keep looking for the calm amidst the storms;
be aware that it’s there, and find comfort in it.

Tremaine Versteeg ‘07

*God has shown thee, O child, what is good and what the Lord requires
of thee. But to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with thy God.*
Micah 6:8

This is my favorite Bible verse. The first time I heard it I was eleven years old at Church Camp. For the turbulent world of a pre-teen, this one verse seemed so simple, so concise, so...easy. Here was everything that God wanted from me wrapped up in a simple verse, with a catchy song that went with it. Being a good Christian was going to be a snap! Or so I thought at the edge of my faith journey. As I have grown-up, I have come to appreciate how much weight this simple verse actually carries. Yes, God is not asking for much, but the little that God requires at times seems impossible.

How can humans possibly hope to be just, kind, and humble *all* the time? Can we really avoid thinking and acting imperfectly? Unfortunately, the answer is we can't.

Wow Erin, uplifting devotion....that's what you're thinking, right? I know it can be depressing to think about our insecurities and inadequacies. BUT, I do have good news...actually GREAT news! We are not alone in trying to live up to God's expectations. The most important part of this verse is not the exhortations it holds, but the fact that God *shows* us how to do them. Our creator does not leave us to fend for ourselves. God has given us the perfect example of human life in Jesus Christ. AND God did not stop there: the Holy Spirit continues to guide us everyday. In this time of Lent, the joy of Easter can seem so far away, but remember that the grace and help of God is ever-present and is always there, even when it seems like life's and God's demands are unreachable.

Erin Armstrong '09

When I was a camp counselor two years ago, I was sent to Elko, Nevada with some other staff to do a week-long day camp. In the process of this week, I got to know a little girl named Jordan. This second grader fell in love with everything around her, including other kids, counselors, games, Bible studies and crafts. She would run around and jump for joy in almost everything we did. Towards the end of the week, Jordan's parents "surprised" her by telling her they were going to go on a vacation to the Rocky Mountains. Because of this, she would have to miss the last day of day camp. To their astonishment, Jordan fell into tears, came up to me and gave me a hug I will never forget and exclaimed, "Counselor Eric, Counselor Eric! I don't want to go! I don't want this to end!"

In my reflection on this event and my looking to the future, I have become aware of how many of us are like Jordan right now. We don't want things to end! Here we are in the Lenten season, the beginning of spring and something new, and we find ourselves afraid. We are afraid of that ever-looming uncertainty of change that lies ahead. Many people have gotten comfortable in our school routines and try to "hang on" to the time we have in the present. Jesus himself was afraid and agitated for the looming future on that dark night in the garden of Gethsemane:

He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here and stay awake with me.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me yet not what I want but what you want.'

Mathew 26:37-39

It is incredibly hard to look into the uncertainty of what lies ahead. However, what this season reminds us of is the great rebirth and change we have yet to come. We must always remember the power and majesty of our Lord and creator who will be with us through the thick and thin of our lives. Let this Lenten season be a time of reflection to prepare for a future of change and new birth. May we go forth into the future holding Christ's hand and looking forward to the everlasting promise of salvation. I pray that whatever lies ahead of you may bring you peace, love and growth in Christ. Amen.

Eric Huseth '07

Who am I?

As I go through my daily activities, I constantly ask myself this question: Who am I? I repeatedly subscribe to the idea that what I do and what I plan to do solely define who I am. This causes me to constantly re-examine my courses, activities, plans after St. Olaf and career plans. Are those activities or careers who I want to be or who I really am?

This past January, I took a class at the capitol that presented yet another opportunity to discover who I am—or so I thought. I learned about the multi-player system of Minnesota state government. As I listened to lobbyists, legislators, commissioners and judicial and executive branch officers tell about their responsibilities, I found myself asking: “Who am I? Does the government interest me? Is it something in which I’d like to get involved? Do I want a career working with state government to define me?”

I found the answers. We went to the House Gallery and heard the first session of the House of Representatives for the biennium. Before any business was conducted and before the “Pledge of Allegiance” was stated, all the members of the House were asked to rise as a pastor began the session with a prayer for guidance, obedience and courage. Witnessing this scene made me remember who I really am. Before the state’s representatives conducted any legislative processes, they acknowledged being God’s instruments and requested His guidance. Likewise, first and foremost, you and I are children of God. We are children of God before we are students, before we are people studying to be doctors, nurses, teachers, pastors, lawyers, politicians, etc.

So often I forget this. I forget about this relationship, forget to strengthen it through communication, and I forget to trust. Lent is a time to redevelop and strengthen that focus. We are children of God; His love is indescribable and undeserved. Let it be our prayer that God “covers us,” as sung so eloquently in the lyrics by Bebo Norman:

Cover me, cover up my tears	Cover up my heart, cover up my soul
Cover up this man who's covered up in fear	Cover up this world and everything I know
I need a peace of mind, I need a piece of you	You cover up the sky, you cover up the sea
To cover all that's gone and everything that's new	Cover up the mountains and every part of me
You unveil me with your mercy	Everything single breath I
I want to breathe you in	breathe...cover me.
You unfold me, then you hold me.	

*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God;
and that is what we are.*

1 John 3:1

I am Yours.

Frieda von Qualen '08

Luke 13:1-9

Repent or Perish

13At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²He asked them, ‘Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.’

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

⁶ Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, “See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?” ⁸He replied, “Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”’

Every New Day

Five Iron Frenzy

Dear Father, I need you
Your strength my heart to mend.
I want to fly higher,
Every new day again.

Man versus himself.
Man versus machine.
Man versus the world.
Mankind versus me.
The struggles go on,
The wisdom I lack,
The burdens keep piling
Up on my back.
So hard to breathe,
To take the next step.
The mountain is high,
I wait in the depths.
Yearning for grace,
And hoping for peace.
Dear God...
Increase.
Healing hands of God have mercy on our unclean souls once
again.
Jesus Christ, light of the world burning bright within our
hearts forever.
Freedom means love without condition,
without a beginning or an end.
Here's my heart, let it be forever Yours,
Only You can make every new day seem so new.

Submitted by Heather D'Evelyn '09

Martin Luther was an uneasy man. A devout Catholic, a committed monk and priest, a brilliant scholar—but uneasy. No matter what he did, he never felt sure he was good enough for God. He spent his life trying to find a balance between comfort and compulsion, turning away from both self-satisfaction and self-repulsion. Luther wanted to feel at ease, to be assured of his own salvation—and yet to never be complacent, to always be striving for a better unity with Christ.

His theology is filled with this uneasiness. He wrote that it is our faith and not our works which save us; we can do nothing to earn God's love. We cannot buy it, we cannot have it any more than any other brother or sister in Christ; we all are one, redeemed and loved. By faith we become subject to none for salvation. And yet, he felt we are servants to all; the faith that saves us will manifest itself in good works in God's world and among God's people.

Even further, it is not our free will to choose faith in Christ, but it is God's grace which grants us faith to save us; it is He who chooses us, and we are free only to accept it. Even then, we cannot be so sure of our salvation as to declare that God's work is finished; there is a hidden will, which we cannot know, that does works which we cannot comprehend.

Our salvation is secure, and yet we cannot own it; our redemption is full, but God's work is not complete. We are always charged with the duty and joy of love and prayer, filled by the Holy Spirit as an agent of faith to be the hands of Christ, both receiving God's love and power and enacting God's will in the creation and among the created. We are never enough; we must always do more; yet even in our lacking, we are always saved. Sin boldly, but believe more boldly still.

As Lent takes us on a journey of introspection and self-reflection, Lord, may you bless us as those who are beloved in grace and fitted for good works. Jesus, make us uneasy, that we may ever seek after You. Amen.

Emmy Kegler '07

This is a favorite story of mine:

The Rain

Thomas Kinkaid

One rainy afternoon I was driving along one of the main streets of town, taking those extra precautions necessary when the roads are wet and slick. Suddenly, my daughter, Aspen, spoke up from her relaxed position in her seat. “Dad, I’m thinking of something.” This announcement usually meant she had been pondering some fact for awhile, and was now ready to expound all that her six-year-old mind had discovered. I was eager to hear.

“What are you thinking?” I asked.

“The rain!” she began, “is like sin, and the windshield wipers are like God wiping our sins away.”

After the chill bumps raced up my arms I was able to respond. “That’s really good, Aspen.” Then my curiosity broke in. How far would this little girl take this revelation? So I asked... “Do you notice how the rain keeps on coming? What does that tell you?”

Aspen didn’t hesitate one moment with her answer: “We keep on sinning, and God just keeps on forgiving us.” I’ll always remember this whenever I turn my wipers on.

*Submitted by Nancy Stuckmayer
Administrative Assistant, Buntrock Commons*

What defines you?

We tend to define ourselves by the things we do; I major in this, do this and that in my free time, volunteer here, and work there.

God never defines us by what we do. He defines us by who we are. However, we tend to spend most of our time trying to be someone we're not. Meanwhile, we keep asking ourselves why we can't be the person that we want to be. We look at everyone around us, wishing we looked like them, acted like them, and had their identity instead of ours.

We do so many things to add to our identity, to try to become someone else, when Jesus chooses us, just as we are. He looks at each of us and tells us we are His favorite. There is no one else He would rather be with right now than you.

God is passionate about His love for His children. He desires to just be with us. He doesn't ask us to do anything for Him. He just says "Rest". Come and rest. He asks us to accept who we are, accept the person He has made us to be and rest in Him. God longs for intimacy with us. God wants to love you. He wants to show you who you are.

God is not under an obligation to love us. God is love. But God doesn't love you because something is compelling Him to. He loves you because He made you and He wants to learn about who you are, what you're thinking, what you do alone late at night, what you want from life.

Will you accept His love? Will you accept who you are and stop striving to be someone else?

As Christians, we cannot be the body of Christ until we each fill the position God has given us.

So, will you fill the position God has given you? Will you be the son or daughter of God he has made you to be? Will the people of God be the people of God?

Sarah Schmidt '09

Don't sin. Don't sin. Don't sin.

We try so hard to avoid sin. We constantly tell ourselves to focus. If only we had that pure focus, we might have the will power to avoid the devil's traps. Does this constant pressure we put on ourselves really help? Is this a good strategy to avoid sin?

Before I got my driver's license, my nervous parents required that I take an intensive three month long course called *Master Drive*. I swear it was meant for military spies training to maneuver a car in the least likely of situations. They made us go through a wicked obstacle course where we were forced to squeak our way past these bright scary traffic cones lined up along the snaking path, inches away from either side of the car. I'm not exactly James Bond, so when the driving instructor said not to let the cones distract me, I thought he was being sarcastic. On my first attempt I stared at every cone, biting my tongue as I tried to avoid it. I thought, "Don't hit that cone. Don't hit that cone. Don't hit that cone." I hit the cones.

The instructor said, "Maybe instead of focusing on not hitting the cones, you should focus on where you are going. If you look ahead, you will move ahead and naturally avoid the cones. If you look at the cones, you will hit the cones." My next try was much more successful, though it was hard not to look at the cones. I had to trust that keeping my eye on the path would naturally lead the car around the cones.

Maybe we can avoid temptation if we focus on something other than our ability to avoid sin. By keeping our focus on God and trusting that God is guiding us forward along a right path, we avoid all sorts of sins we aren't even aware of.

God is good. God is good. God is good.

Jesse Smith '07

May the Lord Be With You

That's easily apparent when you are confident of *you*. Although the concept of our personal selves is typically rooted in how we *feel*, or what we *can* or *can't* do, a truly confident INDIVIDUAL comes from the revelation of *who we are in Christ*. Confidence must be rooted in the faith in Christ and not in ourselves, not in other people, and not in the world or its systems. Our confidence is evident when we know how much God truly loves us and realize that we receive His healing from past hurts and mistakes.

In the real world, where social schizophrenia and our demanding lifestyles lead us to want to be other people or even more perfect versions of them. Judy Garland reminds us: "Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else." Thus, it is essential to follow the principles of authenticity in life. As a result of being too hard on ourselves, we fail to realize the wonder of our everyday life and can accidentally discard the "unimportant." This uncertainty and self-doubt leads us to fear, which causes confusion and indecisiveness; as a result, we are significantly hindered from fulfilling the plan God has for our lives.

Similarly to when we face blank pages in homework, a good dictionary can help point us in some direction with the blank pages of our lives; *Webster's* says that authenticity is "genuine, veritable, bona fide, being actually and precisely what is claimed." There can be no imitation when we genuinely claim to be ourselves. We begin to fill the blank pages of life through the free will we have been granted to choose to believe His promises so that we may *be* confident rather than simply *feeling* confident. Ultimately, we come to discover and appreciate, with confidence, the design of our unique lives.

The barrier created by self-doubt must be broken for us to realize and share in the grace and peace of Christ through our everyday choices. Start simply by discovering that you *can* do and what you are afraid you can't do. If you don't know what you are meant to do with your life, take some time to ask God for help to find out. Jesus says, "I am with you always." Our response should confidently be, "Here *I* am, Lord." May we all develop a more confident relationship with God so that we may be witnesses for Christ and truly act in confidence for His will.

Anna Scaramuzza '08

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

15Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’

³So he told them this parable:

The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

¹¹Then Jesus said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’ ” ²⁰So he 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.

²¹Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²²But 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. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’

²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’

³¹Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’ ’

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Romans 8:22-25

Lent is a season about waiting—we wait eagerly for Easter, for the joyful celebration and the feasting. I usually give something up for Lent, so I wait eagerly until Easter morning and the breaking of my fast. We tend to see Lent as different—penitent, austere, and perhaps a bit depressing. But in many ways, Lent’s time of waiting mirrors our whole lives.

Currently, I am waiting to see what my life will look like after college. The possibilities for the future, good and bad, are frightening because of the uncertainty associated with them. I can’t foresee my life in three years. But this uncertainty leads to an idea that has struck me this year—what it truly means to live in hope.

We know that hope is a good thing—one of those “last three” from 1 Corinthians—faith, hope and love. So we want to have hope, right? But living with hope means giving up knowing. As Romans 8:24 reminds us, “Hope that is seen is no hope at all.” We can’t hope if we already know. However, hope means more than waiting helplessly and blindly—hope means waiting with the certain faith that what you hope for will come to pass. We have not yet seen Christ, but we believe with faithful hope that he is coming. I live in the hope of the promise that no matter what happens after I graduate, all things work together for good for those who love God. During Lent, we wait for Easter, hoping and believing that the Resurrection will come.

While Lent is a season of waiting, we have Easter to remind us that God keeps his promises, and that waiting is meant to end. Our waiting doesn’t end with Easter, really, but Easter gives us a foretaste of the fulfillment of our hope—God’s glorious promises coming to pass. Through friendship, through love, through Communion, through the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection we know certainly that waiting ends. Lent reminds us that although we live in Christ’s glorious promises, we also live in waiting for those promises. We must learn to hope in peace and joy and assurance, because all of our lives consist of hope. Our lives of waiting are a gift, and hope is a gift to revel in and enjoy, a gift that foresees the end of all hope. But on this earth, we have to make peace with unseen, scary, trusting hope, so that we can live in joy of Christ’s secure promises. While Lent reminds us that this is hard—there’s a lot of groaning inwardly, for sure—it also reminds us that the groaning ends, too, and for that we rejoice. I don’t want to go through the rest of my life impatient for something better, or wishing I knew what was going to happen in the future—that’s not what hope is about. I don’t want to rush through Lent to end my waiting. The waiting itself is a gift, because we are given hope. Our entire lives are about living in joyful hope—it’s good that we have a season to make our peace with it.

Emily Vigne ‘09

Humble thyself at the sight of the Lord

...The mighty Creator, Who fashioned everything from the surging ocean to the tiniest dewdrop and loves it all with an everlasting passion. Every breath you take is a small miracle, every step a wonder—a testament to the power of our amazing God.

Humble thyself at the foot of the cross

...Upon which our precious Savior suffered and died, humbling Himself before a world blinded by scorn, but nonetheless tenderly beloved. See the boundless grace and love of God!

Humble thyself at the empty tomb

...Your gift of hope, of blissful freedom in the knowledge that tomorrow lies secure. What wondrous love it is that blesses us so richly. May we always praise the Holy One, Who is over all and above all and in all.

*And He shall lift you up
Higher and higher
And He shall lift you up.*

He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
And to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8

Becky Huncosky '08

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption.

And our charity must be real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner—no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.

“The Weight of Glory,” by C.S. Lewis

Here it is—the challenge of the day: to remember as you’re walking through Buntrock, sitting in class, hanging out in your respective dorm that you are not brushing arms with ordinary people. You are in the company of individuals who are all the work of God’s awesome hand and who are sharers with you in eternity. Wow—that makes even the seemingly dullest day pretty exciting!

Sarah Meyer ‘08

I often have a hard time relating with Confessions of Sin during worship because they can be so distant, so one-size-fits-all. Every now and then I'll find one that conveys powerful and vivid imagery. I discovered one of these confessions two summers ago when I was a Lutheran camp counselor. It summarizes our contradictory culture so well yet reminds us of God's steady and calming nature:

God of perfect rest, we have run busily from one activity to another, from one possession to another, and from one love to another. We want to be quiet but we can't. We are distracted by the loud messages of the world calling us to buy and to sell, to build and to boast, and we look for a quiet place of rest. The noise of the traffic drowns out our dissatisfaction and we move from day to day in activities designed to climb the ladder of success. We are tired and must rest. Please be our resting place and let us sleep safely in your arms. Amen.

I remembered this Confession last fall while walking in Georgetown, a ritzy district in Washington, D.C. I saw numerous upscale shops with customers clothed in expensive business suits; I was wearing my backpack and a St. Olaf sweatshirt. The phrases "loud messages of the world" kept coming back to me. I couldn't help but wonder whether such material goods truly bring happiness to these people.

I felt uncomfortable knowing how much money people spent and how little positive impact it actually made. I knew of my own desires to look trendy, spend money, and "keep up with the Jones." If I stuck around Georgetown I would no doubt spend that money, which would marginally improve my life. In the end, I chose to spend my time in less conflicting places.

Karl Olson '08

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:16-20

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40

Lent is a time when we as Christians prepare ourselves for the Holy Week of our Lord's sacrifice upon the cross. It is a time that we draw close to God, examining and reflecting on our lives and how we might better serve the Lord. One of the primary ways we serve God is by serving other people in His name. We lay aside our own self-preoccupations and demonstrate the love we have received from God to our neighbors.

Serving the people around us takes shape in many different ways. These ways of serving can be placed into two categories, helping the soul and body. We should strive to spread the Gospel, and build up the Body of Christ, while caring for the world with our hands and feet. While these are two different forms of worshiping the Lord through loving our neighbors, they are not mutually exclusive. Both go hand in hand and complement each other. Spreading of the faith does not have to be divorced from caring for physical needs and vice versa.

It is often times easy to focus on one of the two. There are many ministries that focus primarily on evangelism or focus solely on healing of the sick, while there are few that combine the two. This does not mean that it is wrong to have a focused ministry. What it does imply is, as Christians, we should strive to combine the two practices in our daily walks of loving God and people. The wonderful thing is that when the two are used together, they operate the best. Love shown through assisting someone with a physical problem often allows him or her to open up to see the truth of Christ. Sharing the hope we have can allow us to minister to physical afflictions.

This Lenten season, let us come before the Lord asking how we might serve God through being a light to world around us both in word and action!

Father, we praise you that you so graciously redeemed us through the sacrifice of your son. Help us to live in the truth of the cross more fully everyday and let us make Lent a state of heart that lasts everyday and not just forty days. May we learn to love our neighbors more through spreading your truth and being the hands and feet of Jesus. Let us always be prepared to share the hope we have in you and be willing to help the least of neighbors around us. For your glory we live. AMEN!

Glen Rebman '07

At Least

Raymond Carver

I want to get up early one more morning,
before sunrise. Before the birds, even.
I want to throw cold water on my face
and be at my work table
when the sky lightens and smoke
begins to rise from the chimneys
of the other houses.
I want to see the waves break
on this rocky beach, not just hear them
break as I did all night in my sleep.
I want to see again the ships
that pass through the Strait from every
seafaring country in the world-
old, dirty freighters just barely moving along,
and the swift new cargo vessels
painted every color under the sun
that cut the water as they pass.
I want to keep an eye out for them.
And for the little boat that plies
the water between the ships
and the pilot station near the lighthouse.
I want to see them take a man off the ship
and put another up on board.
I want to spend the day watching this happen
and reach my own conclusions.
I hate to seem greedy-I have so much
to be thankful for already.
But I want to get up early one more morning, at least.
And go to my place with some coffee and wait.
Just wait, to see what's going to happen.

Submitted by Taylor Brorby '10

John 12:1-8

Mary Anoints Jesus

1 Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. **2** There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. **3** Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, **5** 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' **6** (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

7 Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

Where's the Love?

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little.

Luke 7:47

“Where is the love?” is the theme for the 2006-7 St. Olaf Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) group for which I am the faculty advisor. This seems to be the main question that Jesus is asking Simon the Pharisee in the scripture passage that precedes the above highlighted verse (Luke 7:47). The answer appears to be linked with how much a person realizes his/her need for God's forgiveness. For example, the sinful woman in the story demonstrated great love for Jesus by washing His feet with her tears of sorrow. On the other hand, Simon the Pharisee, who didn't think he needed much forgiveness, didn't show much love to Jesus.

So how could the Pharisee, and how could we, increase our love for Jesus? I think one solution is found in the parable Jesus told Simon the Pharisee about the moneylender who forgave both the person who sinned much (owed 500 denarii) and the person who had sinned little (owed 50 denarii). The story highlights that “neither of these two people had the money to pay the moneylender back so he canceled the debts of both.” Both people fell short of the necessary payment. Both were in desperate need of forgiveness or they were going to be in a lot of trouble (e.g. debtor's prison). The key point is that it didn't matter how much each had sinned. Understanding our great need for forgiveness should bring the Pharisee, and us, to our knees in gratitude and the result should be that we love Jesus more.

Another important lesson to better understanding how we can love Jesus more is the realization that we sin a lot more than we think we do. For instance, Simon the Pharisee thought that the sinful woman was a great sinner, but he did not see that his air of superiority/holier-than-thou attitude was also something that grieved God deeply. If we see our life as God sees our life, we would be aware of how much we need God's forgiveness. This would then lead us to greater gratitude and consequently greater love for our Savior.

I end with a prayer:

God, I am a sinner. I fall so far short of your holiness. I desperately need a Savior. I am so grateful that you forgive me all my sins (past, present, and future) because of your atoning sacrifice for me on the cross. In return, I give You the only thing I have and the only thing You desire, the thing that any person can give, yet the costliest thing in the whole world. I give You my life. I am Yours. In Jesus' name. Amen.

*Scott Nesbit
Physical Education Instructor*

How many times have you heard that you are loved? How many times have you truly believed it? I have not been to confession in over a year. Yet, whenever I begin to meditate on my anxieties and ask the Lord for guidance, He always directs me back to the advice the priest gave me while I was in reconciliation. Father told me that a very possible reason for my sin and hatred was because I was not accepting the love of God. He said that if I truly understood how much God loves me, then there would be no need for me to judge myself or others, hold grudges, etc. It all seemed to come down to my insecurity and lack of trust in God's unending love.

Being a part of the St. Olaf Choir has been a blessing. Every year there seems to be at least one song that really speaks to me. Ironically, it usually tends to be a song that I hated when first singing it. This year's song for me has been Forsberg's setting of the prayer of St. Francis. So many times I have heard the opening of the prayer: "Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace". The eye opening moment occurred while singing the second half of the prayer:

O, Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; To be understood as to understand; To be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; And it is in dying to ourselves that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

St. Francis of Assisi understood that we do not need to be seeking love and consolation for ourselves. Why is that? Don't we need these things? We do, but it is already provided through the love God gives us. Once we understand that we already have an abundant amount of love given to us and inside of us, we can then take comfort and serve. Our cups are full; there is no need to thirst. Have faith that the Lord loves you. Do not fear. There is no reason to seek for God's love, it is always there.

Sure, there will be struggles. We are human and many times try to convince ourselves that we are not truly loved. If you ever feel unloved, just look at a crucifix.

Sarah Zielinski '08

When I was little I was always a little confused about lent. Give up something for forty days? I didn't really understand why God would want us to deprive ourselves of those things that bring us joy. So, I never really did. I kept eating desserts, drinking soda, and gossiping about people behind their backs, things my Sunday school friends attempted to abstain from during the season. Lucky for me, my pastor would always encourage members of the congregation to *add* something to their lives during lent. While I preferred this idea (as it prevented me from feeling guilty for eating chocolate or grabbing a coke), I never really understood the reason behind his suggestion.

I recently returned from a semester abroad on Term in the Middle East, and reflecting back on my experiences on TIME has allowed me to better understand Pastor Nelson's philosophy of taking *in* rather than pushing *away*. While on the trip I listened to my i-pod nearly every evening before going to bed, and almost every night I put on one of my favorite Indigo Girls songs, "All That We Let In." Night by night, as these ladies sang me to sleep, the chorus, which goes "I don't know where it all begins...and I don't know where it all will end...We're better off for all that we let in," flowed into my ears. The song became my pseudo motto for the trip, because...well, it's true. For everyday that I woke up in Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, or Greece I *was* better off for all that I let in. But as I begin to adjust to life back in the United States and on the hill, I realize that these words remain just as true to my more routine life on campus or at home as they did while I was abroad. I am enriched and made better by every fireside chat I have, every impromptu snowball fight I start, every piece of music I play, every caf date I go on, and, yes, even every paper I write. While fasting and sacrifice can be a very important part of the season of Lent, it is important that in this sense of absence we rediscover the greatness of the world that surrounds us, that we revel in the beauty that is the frost, the whistle of the wind, the touch of a friend, the comfort of community...for our lives are truly better off for all that we let in.

Sarah Frank '08

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:1-4

My friend Eric and I often irritate our other friends by refusing payment on certain small things such as the use of laundry cards or small items at a food stand on campus. When asked how much we are owed we often say that we conveniently forgot, making them even more irritated with us.

My friend Laura and Lindsay finally had enough of this refusal to take their money. One night Eric, Laura, Lindsay, and I ordered some food in which Eric and I refused to take payment from the other two. I accidentally mentioned to them that I had other business to attend to around campus.

The next morning I reached underneath my pillow to find an envelope addressed to me from the Finnish Tooth Fairy (my heritage is Finnish). Inside the envelope was the exact amount of money that Laura and Lindsay owed me.

Though these small acts of kindness that we do among friends are not quite acts that help the needy, we still acknowledge the idea of humble generosity. Reward for a good action does not come from those here on earth because the act can easily be forgotten the next day. God will always remember these acts and be there with us when everything seems to just fall apart. Everyone goes through these times at some point, where every act seems to go unnoticed and your own strength seems to be failing. Always remember, however, we have been given the gift of salvation through the sacrifice on the cross. No reward can match this awesome gift. So for the honor and glory of God, go and do an act of kindness for the needy with the knowledge that you have an awesome God to back you up.

Let us pray:

Dear Heavenly guider, please be with us in our times of trouble and to also give us the strength help the needy even when we will be scorned or sapped of strength because of it. Thank you for our gifts to serve you and all people as well as the life and friends that you have given us. Amen.

Erik Grayvold '09

At the end of my time on Term in the Middle East, we were assigned the tedious task of writing a paper on pilgrimage—a traveler’s memoir. The intent for the paper was to conclude whether or not our journey through the Middle East had in fact been a pilgrimage for us.

This paper served as a springboard for me to unpack the experiences I had in each country, but it may have been taken in a different direction to reflect the spiritual experience of my term abroad. In writing about my personal pilgrimage, I concluded that I did not fully understand the transformation that I had been through in the Middle East and may not fully know until years from now. Henry Partin wrote, “A pilgrim moves backward in time and that as he moves outward toward some distant goal he moves inward in quest of the center of his own being.” Likewise, it is important to “move inward in quest of the center of [our] own being,” for spiritual reflection.

While away from my church at home and at St. Olaf, I often asked questions like: Why do I believe what I do? What makes my faith important to me? How do I use my faith as an example for others (regardless his or her of religion)? I ended my term with more questions than I had when I left home and fewer answers than I thought I might have had when I returned home.

In quiet reflection, I am reminded of the simple words that have been reinforced many times before and the faithful examples by which I have learned. I go back to my favorite hymn, “How Great Thou Art,” to serve as an example of hope.

But when I think that God, His son not sparing, Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in, That on the cross my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin.

The tedious paper has become an appropriately tedious question for the future. Where is my personal pilgrimage leading me? And so begins Lent—the season of wonderment and hope.

Mark Forsberg '08

About three years ago I found myself broken-spirited. I felt incomplete and separated from God. I was struggling with an ongoing inner-conflict involving my behavior and my essential purpose. I prayed for answers, and God answered my call. He led me to Ephesians, chapter 5. This chapter has meant so much to me, as it has helped me to discover my identity as a child of God. Here is a summary of the chapter, highlighting the message of living in the example of Christ.

Ephesians 5:1-2, 10-17

Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But when the light shines on them, it becomes clear how evil these things are. And where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds. This is why it is said:

"Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.

At this time of year we remember the sacrifice that Christ made so that we may have eternal life. I invite you to spend some time in personal reflection. Let this be a time of spiritual awakening and a time to remember to walk in the footprints of Christ.

Charlie Stuckey '10

Luke 23:1-49

Jesus before Pilate

23Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. ²They began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.’

³Then Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’

He answered, ‘You say so.’

⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, ‘I find no basis for an accusation against this man.’

⁵But they were insistent and said, ‘He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.’

Jesus before Herod

⁶When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.

⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. ⁹He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him

back to Pilate. ¹²That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

Jesus Sentenced to Death

¹³Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, ‘You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶I will therefore have him flogged and release him.’

¹⁸Then they all shouted out together, ‘Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!’ ¹⁹(This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.)

²⁰Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; ²¹but they kept shouting, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’

²²A third time he said to them, ‘Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.’

²³But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²⁶As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." ³¹For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!'

³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!'

³⁸There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!'

⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?' ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.'

⁴²Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

⁴³He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁴It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last.

⁴⁷When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.' ⁴⁸And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Several years ago, at the time of my confirmation, my confirmation mentor gave me a book called *The Matthew Passion: A Lenten Journey to the Cross and Resurrection*. The author, John Fenton, selects passages from the Gospel of Matthew to serve as a guide through the Lenten season to Easter. Every year, I mean to begin reading this book on Ash Wednesday and to read it every day until Easter. However, six years after my confirmation, I still have not picked this book up. However, for the seventh Lent in a row, I plan to read and reflect on the Gospel of Matthew this Lent because I believe that Fenton, through his book, provides an interesting answer to the question, What is Lent about?

I often ask myself this question during the Ash Wednesday service as we head into a season void of the “A” word, and full of resolutions to not eat dessert, to not watch TV, to pray everyday, or to not hit the snooze button! But, Lent must mean more to Christians than just being a time to give something up. We are, of course, preparing for Christ’s Passion and for the miracle of Easter morning, but how do we prepare for that? By taking the Gospel of Matthew and reflecting on passages throughout the season of Lent, Fenton suggests that Lent can be used as a time to reflect upon the entire story of Jesus, leading up to his crucifixion and resurrection.

The first reading that Fenton selects is Matthew 1:1-17, which details the genealogy of Jesus. This ties the Passion not only with the story of Jesus, but with the story of history. It is a reminder that the Passion of Christ is connected to the story of history. For centuries, the Jewish people had awaited a Messiah to redeem the world. Therefore, the story of the crucifixion and resurrection not only fits into the story of Jesus and his band of followers, but into the history of the world. Therefore, it is only appropriate that as we prepare to commemorate the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, we look back on his life, and connect that life into the history of the world. Perhaps that is how we can use to Lent to prepare for Easter morning.

Peter Schattauer '08

Kierkegaard at the Vineyard

The knight of resignation came at dawn
with scant expectation of wage and no hope of wine
ready for toil in unyielding clay

In the heat of the day more came to labor
called by the owner
promised a fair wage.

Late I heard the summons, after napping,
and stumbled in to serve
as the day waned.

Last, the knight of faith arrived
the sunset playing on his smile
Just in time to queue for wages.

All grumbled alike at the grace we received,
while the knight of faith took the wage with equanimity
and walked away undeserving
but changed.

Chuck Huff
Professor of Psychology

I played Pontius Pilate in the Christ Hike at camp. This means I sat in the Lodge for almost half an hour waiting for my scene. It was important that I only play this role so that no one got me confused with a holy disciple or something like that. While lounging on the leather couches the shepherds would come in and visit after their trip to the manger to greet the Christ child. They would then change into their guard costumes and wait until the Gethsemane scene where they would go and arrest Jesus after Judas kissed him. Then it would finally be my turn.

Paul, my fellow counselor who played Jesus, would come around the corner to my hide-out on the Lodge balcony. Since I had been laughing and joking around for a half-hour, I would usually greet him with a cheerful smile. But he always looked so tired—not like Paul, the camp-clown. Most people thought he wouldn't be able to be serious enough to play Jesus, since usually you couldn't get him to shut up; he was always quoting Eddy Izzard.

He could have stopped acting when he came around the corner because he was out of the crowd's view. But he wasn't acting, he was just tired. Week after week he played the role of Jesus. One week his mother came to see him in the Christ Hike. As he passed her, after I sentenced him to death, his friends pushed him down, he fell on the gravel path and cut his leg. He actually bled. Amy, who played Mary, Jesus' mother, ran out after him to kneel at the foot of the cross, but it was Paul's mother who actually shed tears. She told us later that she finally understood.

Meanwhile, I watched from my balcony as my peers—the guards I had just been laughing with—"nailed" Paul to the cross. I winced every week at the metallic hammer noises that Sonya made from her hidden spot behind the cross. Paul's hands were not nailed but he held his arms out as if they were. He waited for the crowd to leave. He told us how badly this hurt—holding his arms still. But he stayed on the cross, waiting.

Every Tuesday I sentenced my friend to this fate because the theme of the day was forgiveness.

Lord God,
The season of Lent can become a routine to us when it comes year after year. Help us remember that we are all guilty of sentencing Jesus to death every time we turn our backs on him. And during this season of lent, help us take time to stop; to recognize what an amazing sacrifice Jesus made for us and how wonderful his forgiveness is. Help us to live by Jesus' example and reach out of ourselves to those in need.
Amen.

Marie Olson '07

Maunday Thursday—Kyrie

Jochen Klepper

Today I am my Savior's guest
In bread and wine and the Easter lamb.
In the garden outside a branch breaks.
Does the bow of the cross already fall?
Kyrie elaison!

The Savior is my servant and host
He serves me and his crowd of disciples.
He who is the Lord of all heaven
Himself here renders bare God's glory.
Kyrie elaison!

He salves and bathes our feet
Passes us the cup and breaks the loaf
And already waits for the kiss of Judas
So I may rest without strife.
Kyrie elaison!

With a pilgrim's hat and walking stick
He holds, this shepherd, the Pascha-meal.
And as he gives it, he goes to the grave
To the torture of the cross, scorn, and hatred.
Kyrie elaison!

In the garden of Gethsemane
A beam for the cross already has fallen.
That the cup should yet pass him by,
Pleads the Savior of all the world.
Kyrie elaison!

The cup of bitter pain and death
He has already prepared to drink
For this remembrance, he has set
A supper for all time
Kyrie elaison!

The hour of betrayal is here.
No place serves as a shield
He stays near to his own [though they flee]
In cup and bread and word.
Kyrie elaison!

The cup is now my own
And bread and wine my lavish share.
The cup takes its glory
In announcing salvation to the sinner!
Kyrie elaison!

His name announced,
As often as it is now thought
As a scourge, a curse, and pain.
Until he sends us a sign of victory,
Kyrie elaison!

He comes, he comes, that is sure,
To the joyous meal of his disciples
At the end of all darkness
Is always found the cross's posts!
Hosanna!

The Columbine

*They went to a place called Gethsemane;
and he said..."I am deeply grieved, even to death"*
Mark 14:34-5

Yes Lord, there was light,
and the sun was you.
The numinous sky was warm from you,
yellow from you,
a holy amber.
Pressed into the earth,
my roots thirsting through clay,
even then I knew:
though my face is your reflection,
soon I'll wear buckthorn like a crown,
my stem will dry and ache,
my petals curl and silence follow.
Just look at my spurs,
the red of them,
trailing behind me
like dew, like sweat, like drops of blood.

Brett DeFries '08

Holy Saturday

The bread and wine, the blood in Gethsemane, the scourging at the pillar, the road to Golgotha, the death of Jesus: all of these are behind us now, but our hope has not yet come. What is there in the uncomfortable, unresolved silence? How can we fathom the depths to which Christ descends, when his 'becoming sin' for our sake drags him to the depths of hell? How do we understand the silencing of the Eternal Word of God? How can we speak at all in this moment when God himself was silent? We can do none of these, yet as followers of Christ, we are called to imitate him. And so today we do not rejoice, we do not speculate, we do not fidget, and we do not complain. We are followers of Christ, so we contemplate the mysteries this day holds in the only way Christ has shown us: in silence.

Ben Heidgerken '07

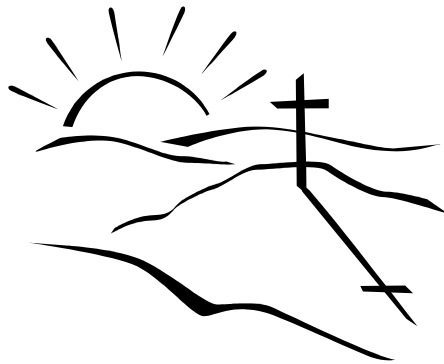
Luke 24:1-12

The Resurrection of Jesus

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' ⁸Then they remembered his words,

⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Peace be with you



This Devotional Booklet is a gift from the St. Olaf Student Congregation.

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Thank you.