



# *The Season of Lent*

WEEKLY MEDITATION GUIDE





## *Weekly Meditations for Lent*

The Mediations for Lent are based on the Old Testament readings. The readings are some of the covenants that God makes with God's people – the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, David, and New Covenants. They are unconditional promises to us from God. The Noahic Covenant is between God, the people of God, and all living creatures. It is a covenant of faithfulness. God will be faithful to all God has created. The Abrahamic Covenant (in the Judeo-Christian tradition through Isaac) is an unconditional promise of the greatness of the descendants of Abraham and nations that will be formed. The Mosaic Covenant is based on God's people following the laws that God has set out for each of us to follow as we grow closer to God. The Davidic covenant brings God's people back into loving relationship with God, especially when we stray. The New Covenant promises to turn God's people back to God with all their hearts and with their zeal to be obedient to God. This promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God loves us unconditionally and seeks our hearts.



**Item: Prism**

*An octagonal glass can separate a beam of white light into a spectrum of colors. It is an image of God's light beaming on the whole of humanity and God's truth and reality being refracted onto and throughout all of God's creation. It takes all of us, working together in love and peace, to see the beauty of the world God has created for us.*

**Reading: Genesis 9:8-17**

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that

never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

## Reflection

The covenant that God establishes here is an unusual covenant. Most covenants are between two entities, with the more powerful one promising protection and provision and the less powerful one promising loyalty. In this reading: however, God establishes a covenant with not just Noah, but with “every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” Noah is merely a stand-in entity. God makes this promise to the billions and billions of creatures, both human and animal, who will call Earth home. Further, despite the fact that the first flood was the consequence of humanity’s evil, God requires no promises from humanity in this covenant. God will never destroy the earth by flood again, even though humanity is still sinful and will forsake God again. The rainbow is God’s pledge to us of this unusual covenant; a sign visible to all generations that God will remember God’s abundant promises.

## 1 Lent Questions

- *What kind of a God makes a one-sided, everlasting covenant with humanity?*
- *What aspects of God’s character does this passage highlight? God promises to remember this covenant through the rainbow.*
- *What does it mean for us as humans to remember this covenant? What are your feelings when you see a rainbow in the sky? Why?*



## Second Week of Lent

### Item: Ribbon

*Tie at least five knots in the ribbon. Each knot represents a covenant. Pull the ribbon with knots taunt (place hands on either end of ribbon and pull firmly). Try to untie the knots. When God makes a covenant with us, God never unties or lets go of the promise made to you. You may be able to untie the knot and walk away, but you can not untie God from the covenant God makes with you. You can not separate yourselves from the love God has for you. God will never loosen or untie you from God's love and faithfulness.*

### Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between

me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

## Reflection

Although Abraham and Sarah enacted their own solution in response to Sarah being unable to conceive a child (Abram had a child, Ishmael, with Hagar, Sarai's slave-girl), thirteen years later, God appears and reveals that Sarah will conceive a son, through whom Abraham will "be the ancestor of a multitude of nations." Sarah "will give rise to nations," and "kings of people will come from her." Abraham does not rationalize or make excuses for enacting his and Sarah's solution. He prostrates himself in response to being in the presence of Almighty God.

Reviewing one's life in the presence of God and identifying areas for correction need not cause shame and guilt; being in the presence of the Divine can evoke awe and humility, whatever one's present state of being. While one may sense that he or she has lost the way in discerning and following the ways of God, there are repeated invitations to turn back to God. Every day we may come before God to renew our relationship and adjust the course of our lives in response to God's call.

## 2 Lent Questions

- *Are there any areas of your life in which God might be inviting you to change course or start anew?*
- *Like the knot in the ribbon, God never unties us from God's love and promise. Have you ever pushed God away and taken things into your own hands? How did you know God was still with you?*
- *What does your life look like with God? Are there ebbs and flows? Why did you draw away or come closer to God?*

## Third Week of Lent

### **Item: The Ten Commandments and The Decalogue**

*The commandments are found in Exodus and Deuteronomy. The decalogue is found in the BCP on page 317-318. During Lent, you may recite the decalogue or the commandments, reflect on one or two commandments each day. Write a reflection on the rewards or challenges of the commandment in your daily life.*

### **Reading: Exodus 20:1-17**

Then God spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on

the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but

rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

## **Reflection**

The recitation of the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue, will likely be familiar to you as listeners of this week's Old Testament reading. What is striking in

this reading is that God, not Moses, is speaking directly to the Israelites. Hearing directly from the Divine would have left quite an impact on these former Egyptian slaves, as they made their way through the desert.

There's an order to the commandments as well – come into right relationship with God (the first four commandments) and then you can be in right relationship with each other (the remaining six). The directives are not meant to micro-manage your life but to apply constant pressure; the pressure of discipleship and formation. Discipleship and formation continue to guide you toward a life that is in a right relationship with God, creation, and each other.

### 3 Lent Questions

- *Where are some areas where you are individually or collectively out of sync with God's directives?*
- *What are some small practices that you might initiate to help re-form your life to be in better relationship with God and with each other?*
- *Pray the Decalogue daily as a Lenten practice.*



#### **Item: Herbs (Bay and Rosemary) from Gardens of All Saints'**

*Bay a symbol of courage in trial or a journey. It is a reminder of the presence of God even when times are hard. Per legend, a Rosemary bush offered shelter for Mary when she, with baby Jesus and Joseph, fled to Egypt. In those dark and scary times, in our trials, our God is steadfast in love and hope.*

#### **Reading: Numbers 21:4-9**

From Mount Hor the Israelites set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have

sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

## **Reflection**

This passage finds the people of Israel after they have left Egypt and journeyed through the wilderness. Bullied by the Edomites, the Israelites become impatient on the circuitous route and repeat their malcontented refrain: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” God responds by sending poisonous snakes among the people, killing many. The people come to Moses and

ask for him to intercede on their behalf. The serpents were themselves the affliction, and in an act of ironic salvation, the Lord uses a serpent of bronze to become the instrument of healing for those bitten. In God’s wisdom, God uses a golden snake to symbolize healing. As slaves, the Israelites saw the golden snake on the pharaoh’s headdress which was a symbol of raw power, domination, and absolute control. As God’s people, God used the golden snake in contrast to pharaoh, as a symbol of love and healing.

Upon a first reading, this punishment hardly seems to fit the crime the Israelites commit. But this event is not an isolated incident. The people have complained before, and in fact, they refused to enter into the Promised Land for fear of its occupants.

Though the people of Israel are unhappy with Moses and God, the one thing that is never in doubt is God's presence among the people. When the people complain against God, the Lord hears. When the people repent, God hears and responds with healing and relief from suffering.

#### 4 Lent Questions

- *How is this story harmonious or dissonant with your conception of God's justice?*
- *Is all suffering some kind of divine discipline or punishment? Is suffering a way to be transformed and see old ways in a new light? How does that happen in your life? Why does God move us from what we know to seeing the same, or the old, in a new way?*
- *Can you think of a time you felt that God led you to a place of wilderness?*
- *In what ways has God delivered you from bondage as God delivered the Israelites from Egypt?*
- *Wherever you are on your life journey, whether feeling the joy of healing and wholeness or in the miserable trek through wilderness, how and where do you see God accompanying you?*



**Item: Heart**

*Write the words that God has written on your heart, words that have transformed you, words that have guided you into love, peace, and reconciliation with God and others in your life*

**Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will

write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

**Reflection**

The prophet Jeremiah was active in the final years of the kingdom of Judah, leading up to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BC and the Jewish people’s exile in Babylon. In the face of this impending destruction, he nevertheless foresaw a restored life for the people, one in which they would be even closer to God than before. God promised to maintain a covenantal relationship with the people, just as he had after the Exodus – but instead of a law written on stone tablets, God would write the

law of the new covenant on their hearts. Later Christian interpreters would see themselves as the recipients of this “new covenant” or, in one Latin translation, *Novum Testamentum*, from which we get the term “New Testament.”

### 5 Lent Questions

- *Have you ever felt comforted by a promise during a difficult time? When? How did the promise help you move on?*
- *What would it look like for God to write God’s law on your heart? Has your Lenten practice helped you move toward this vision?*



### Item: Palm Cross

*The cross is the symbol of suffering, of love, forgiveness, transformation. It is the hope of the Resurrection. Let it remind you to speak the love of God in all parts of your life.*

### Palm Sunday Reading:

#### Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Lord God has given me  
the tongue of a teacher, that I may  
know how to sustain the weary  
with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens –  
wakens my ear to listen as those  
who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious, I did not  
turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck  
me, and my cheeks to those who  
pulled out the beard;

I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.  
The Lord God helps me;  
therefore I have not been  
disgraced; therefore I have set my  
face like flint, and I know that I  
shall not be put to shame;  
he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?  
Let them confront me.

It is the Lord God who helps me;  
who will declare me guilty?

## Reflection

As we begin Holy Week, this passage in Isaiah reminds us of God's help in times of distress. This passage was likely written during the time of Babylonian exile in the 6th Century BC – a time of great suffering and disorientation for the Israelites. Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion would have been similarly devastating for the

disciples. The Israelites experienced the destruction of their temple and physical exile to a foreign land; the disciples faced the death of their teacher and the fear and uncertainty of what the future might hold. This passage assures you that even in times of persecution and doubt, God is your help. Isaiah finds strength from God both in confronting his adversaries and in comforting those in need. You, too, can find sustenance from God this week and in your own moments of exile, pain, or uncertainty. Isaiah writes, "The Lord has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word" (v. 50:4).

### 6 Lent Questions

- *How have you been comforted by the words of others?*
- *How has God helped you to speak words of comfort to those in need?*

*In peace and prayer,  
we now move into Holy Week.*



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