



## ASHES TO ALLELUIAS

*A Lenten Journey of Faith and Hope*

“Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”  
*(Psalm 30:5)*

*Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Winchester, Virginia*



Lent is not a season we rush through. It is a season we *walk through*. Slowly. Honestly. Sometimes quietly. Sometimes carrying questions, burdens, or grief we can barely name.

It begins in ashes, with the reminder that we are fragile, mortal, and deeply in need of grace. And it ends at an empty tomb, with the astonishing promise that death, sin, and despair do not get the final word, and Alleluias abound.

This devotional journey is meant to help you walk that road from Ash Wednesday to Easter morning one day at a time. Along the way, we will travel with Jesus into the wilderness, sit beside a well, watch blind eyes opened, stand before a tomb, kneel in an upper room, keep vigil at the cross, and finally hear the angel say, "He is not here. He has been raised."

These readings and reflections are not meant to be long or complicated. They are meant to be faithful companions — simple, honest invitations to prayer, reflection, and trust.

Some days will feel full of light. Some will feel heavy. That is part of the journey. Lent teaches us that God meets us not only in resurrection, but in wilderness, waiting, and even in silence.

My prayer is that this devotional will help you make space for God each day, listen more deeply to Scripture, and walk toward Easter not just informed — but transformed.

Grace and peace to you in this holy season.

Pastor Dave

Ash Wednesday reminds us that life is fragile, and time is holy. Jesus calls us into a quiet, honest life with God, where prayer, generosity, and fasting are meant to realign our hearts, not impress others. Jesus' words cut gently but clearly: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Lent begins by asking us to notice what we truly cling to and whether it gives life or slowly takes it away. The ashes on our foreheads are not a mark of shame, but of truth: we belong to God, and we are always being invited to come home.

*Gracious God, strip away what is false in me. Teach my heart to desire what lasts. Lead me into this holy season with honesty and hope. Amen.*

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**Thursday, February 19****Joel 2:12–17**

God does not say, "Fix yourself and then come back." God says, "Return to me." Even now. Even here. Even with all that is unfinished and broken. This is the heart of repentance; not fear, but trust. Joel reminds us that God's mercy is deeper than our failure. Lent is not about proving anything. It is about turning back toward the One who has never stopped loving us.

*Merciful God, I return to you just as I am. Receive me and renew me. Amen.*

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**Friday, February 20****Psalm 51:1–12**

David does not defend himself. He opens himself. This psalm is not about shame — it is about transformation. God does not merely forgive; God restores. Lent invites us to pray this brave prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Not a patched heart. Not a slightly improved heart. A new one.

*God of mercy, make me new from the inside out. Restore joy where I am weary. Amen.*

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**Saturday, February 21****Isaiah 58:1–9a**

God challenges a religion that looks serious but ignores suffering. True worship always reflects in how we love our neighbors. Repentance always changes how we treat others. The fast God desires is not about appearing holy; it is about becoming merciful.

*God of justice, teach me a faith that loves in action, not just words. Amen.*

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## Week 1: Into the Wilderness

*“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted,” (Matthew 4:1)*

**Sunday, February 22**

**Matthew 4:1-11**

Jesus does not wander into the wilderness by accident; the Spirit leads him there. The wilderness is not punishment. It is preparation. Every temptation Jesus faces is about trust: Will he grasp power, or rely on God? Lent invites us to ask the same.

*God, when I am tested, teach me to trust you more than my fears. Amen.*

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**Monday, February 23**

**Deuteronomy 8:1-10**

God reminds Israel that the wilderness shaped them. Hunger taught dependence. Uncertainty taught trust. Sometimes only the hard roads teach us what really sustains us.

*Thank you, God, for walking with me even when the way is hard. Amen.*

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**Tuesday, February 24**

**Psalm 91**

God does not promise to remove every danger — but to be present in every trial. We are not invincible. We are held.

*Sheltering God, remind me that I am never alone. Amen.*

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**Wednesday, February 25**

**Hebrews 4:14-16**

Jesus knows temptation. He knows weaknesses. And still invites us to come boldly. Grace is not distant. It is accessible.

*Thank you, Jesus, for understanding me completely and loving me still. Amen.*

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**Thursday, February 26**

**James 1:12-18**

God is not the source of temptation, but the giver of every good gift. Even in struggle, God is shaping something good.

*Steady God, help me trust your goodness even when life is hard. Amen.*

**Friday, February 27**

**1 Corinthians 10:1–13**

God never abandons us to temptation. There is always a way forward even if we can't see it yet. God's fidelity is assured in Christ for every part of the journey of life.

*God, make the next faithful step clear. Amen.*

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**Saturday, February 28**

**Psalm 32**

Confession is not humiliation, it is freedom. When we stop hiding, healing can begin. Our repentance is clarity and clarity breeds agency, and new possibilities for life.

*God, thank you for meeting me with mercy, not condemnation. Amen.*

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## **Week 2: Born from Above**

*“No one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above,” (John 3:3)*

**Sunday, March 1**

**John 3:1–17**

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night — curious, cautious, and unsure. He has knowledge, status, and sincerity, but Jesus invites him into something deeper: not improvement, but rebirth. We spend so much of life trying to fix ourselves. Jesus speaks of something far more radical: a new beginning given by God.

*God of new beginnings, breathe your Spirit into me again. Make me new where I have grown tired and afraid. Amen.*

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**Monday, March 2**

**Numbers 21:4–9**

In the wilderness, the people are healed not by their own effort, but by trusting what God provides. Sometimes faith is not doing more. It is trusting more.

*God, teach me to look to you for healing and hope. Amen.*

## Tuesday, March 3

Ephesians 2:1-10

We do not save ourselves. We are rescued by grace, not effort. And that gift changes everything.

*Gracious God, thank you for loving me before I could ever earn it. Shape my life for your good purposes. Amen.*

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## Wednesday, March 4

Psalm 121

We grow tired. God does not. We lose focus. God does not. We are uncertain about the way forward. God is not. Our help comes from the Lord.

*Watchful God, thank you for holding my life even when I cannot hold it together. Amen.*

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## Thursday, March 5

Titus 3:3-7

We are saved not because we were good enough, but because God is merciful. Our story is not about deserving. It is about being loved.

*Merciful God, thank you for rescuing me with kindness I did not earn. Amen.*

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## Friday, March 6

Romans 5:6-11

Christ did not wait for us to get our lives together. He came while we were still sinners. Grace meets us at our neediest, and leads us to nourishment and refreshment.

*God, thank you for loving me exactly where I am. Amen.*

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## Saturday, March 7

Isaiah 45:20-25

God's arms are wider than we imagine. Grace is bigger than we expect. Being faithful means embracing God's compassion even as it confronts our insecurities.

*Saving God, turn my heart toward you again and again. Amen.*

## Week 3: Living Water

*“The woman said, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty,” (John 4:15)*

**Sunday, March 8**

**John 4:5–42**

The woman comes to the well when others don’t. She is tired of the whispers, the looks, and the judgement. And yet this is where Jesus chooses to meet her. Jesus does not avoid her story, he redeems it. And the woman who hid becomes the first evangelist to her town.

*Jesus, meet me in the places I try to avoid. Give me your living water. Amen.*

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**Monday, March 9**

**Exodus 17:1–7**

The people complain. Moses is exhausted. And still—God provides. Water flows from the most unlikely place. We often look for God in comfort. But sometimes grace comes from the rock we thought would break us.

*God, help me trust you even when I am thirsty and afraid. Amen.*

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**Tuesday, March 10**

**Psalm 42**

This psalm names a deep spiritual ache; the longing not just for answers, but for God. Sometimes faith is not certainty. Sometimes it is thirst; and thirst itself can be a prayer.

*God, I long for you more than I long for easy answers. Meet me in my thirst. Amen.*

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**Wednesday, March 11**

**Isaiah 55:1–3**

God’s invitation is astonishingly generous: come, eat, drink—without money, without price. Grace is not a transaction. It is a gift. God does not ration mercy.

*Generous God, teach me to receive what I cannot earn. Amen.*

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**Thursday, March 12**

**Revelation 22:1–5**

The Bible ends where it began, with life flowing freely from God. No more thirst. No more darkness. Every small drink of grace now points toward that coming fullness.

*God of hope, keep my eyes on the life you are bringing. Amen.*

**Friday, March 13**

**1 Corinthians 10:1-4**

Paul reminds us that God (Christ) was with Israel in the wilderness, long before Bethlehem. God's fidelity has always traveled with God's people. We are never as alone as we may feel.

*Faithful God, thank you for walking with me even when I don't see you. Amen.*

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**Saturday, March 14**

**Jeremiah 2:9-13**

God speaks with sorrow: "You have forsaken the spring of living water and dug broken cisterns." We all trust things that cannot ultimately hold what we need. Lent gently asks: What am I really drinking from?

*God, turn me back to the only source that truly satisfies. Amen.*

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## **Week 4: Truly Seeing and Being Truly Seen**

*"One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see," (John 9: 25)*

**Sunday, March 15**

**John 9:1-41**

The man does not know much theology. He cannot explain how it happened. He only knows this: "I was blind, and now I see." Sometimes faith is not a perfect argument, but a changed life. This story is about more than physical sight, which the truly blind refuse to see. Jesus opens eyes so that we might see with the heart and soul of God.

*Jesus, open my eyes to your truth, your grace, and your presence in my life. Amen.*

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**Monday, March 16**

**Psalm 27**

Fear loves the dark. But David dares to say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" Light does not erase every problem, but it changes the shadows.

*Light of the world, shine in the places where I am afraid. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 17**

**Isaiah 42:5–9**

God's servant does not come to crush bruised reeds or snuff out dim wicks. He comes to open eyes and sets people free. God's power is revealed not in domination—but in healing.

*God, make me a bearer of your gentle light in this world. Amen.*

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**Wednesday, March 18**

**2 Corinthians 4:3–6**

God does not hide light in perfect containers. God places it in fragile ones—like us. The point is not our strength, but God's glory.

*God, let your light shine through my imperfections. Amen.*

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**Thursday, March 19**

**Ephesians 5:8–14**

Paul does not shame us, he invites us: "Live as children of light." Faith is not just believing, it is becoming. The joy of living life in the light is that all can be redeemed!

*God, wake me up to the life you are calling me to live. Amen.*

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**Friday, March 20**

**1 Samuel 16:1–13**

God does not choose as humans choose. While others look for height, strength, and polish, God looks at the heart. He doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the call.

*God, help me see people the way you see them. Amen.*

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**Saturday, March 21**

**Psalm 23**

The psalm does not say we avoid dark valleys. It says we are not alone in them. And we walk through them; we don't pitch a tent in them. God leads us beyond them.

*Shepherd God, walk with me through every valley. Amen.*

## Week 5: Even Now

*“But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him,” (John 11:22)*

**Sunday, March 22**

**John 11:1-45**

Martha’s words hold both faith and heartbreak. Jesus meets her amidst both, even as he experiences both with her, and brings life out of death. Still, it reminds that we may bring all of ourselves to God; our uncertainties, frustrations, and fears are welcome and redeemed.

*Jesus, meet me in my grief and teach me to trust you even now. Amen.*

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**Monday, March 23**

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

God specializes in resurrection, even in places that seem beyond hope. The raising of dry bones is symbolic of what God does daily in our lives and in our world.

*God of life, breathe your Spirit into what I have given up on. Amen.*

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**Tuesday, March 24**

**Psalm 130**

Waiting is not giving up. It is trusting the coming of the light even amidst the dark, and especially when it is darkest.

*God, hear me when I cry from deep places. Teach me to wait in hope. Amen.*

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**Wednesday, March 25**

**Romans 8:6-11**

The Spirit animates, inspires, and guides. The Spirit strengthens, supports, and refreshes. The Spirit challenges, comforts, and confirms. The Spirit who raised Jesus now lives in you.

*Living God, let your Spirit shape how I live today. Amen.*

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**Thursday, March 26**

**2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

God is not merely improving you; God is remaking you. God is not merely enhancing you; God is endowing you with God’s power. God is not only developing you, but also redeeming you!

*God, help me live as someone you are making new. Amen.*

**Friday, March 27**

**Philippians 3:7–11**

Faith is not about comfort. It is about communion. We are created for community and find our fullest humanity in relationship with God and each other.

*Jesus, draw me closer to you, whatever the cost. Amen.*

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**Saturday, March 28**

**Lamentations 3:31–33**

Sorrow is real, but it is not the final word. Fear is real, but it is not final word. Struggle and uncertainty are real, but neither are they the final word. Hope, forever in Christ, is the final word. Always.

*God of compassion, help me trust that hope is still coming. Amen.*

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## **Holy Week: The Most Sacred Week of the Year**

### **From Waving Palms to Jesus' Passion**

**Palm Sunday, March 29**

**Matthew 27:11–54**

The crowds wanted a king who would conquer. They received a Savior who would suffer. Jesus stands before Pilate silent, strong, and resolved; not because he is powerless, but because he is faithful. This is the great reversal: the throne is a cross, the crown is thorns, and the victory is love that refuses to let go. We do not worship a distant hero; we follow a crucified King.

*Jesus, teach me to follow you not only in triumph, but in sacrifice. Amen.*

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**Monday, March 30**

**Isaiah 50:4–9a**

The servant of God does not shrink from suffering. She listens. She trusts. She keeps walking forward. “I have set my face like flint,” she says.

*Faithful God, give me courage to follow you even when it is hard. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 31**

**Psalm 31:9–16**

This psalm holds fear and trust together in the same breath. “My times are in your hands.” Even as danger closes in, the psalmist clings to God. Jesus will soon pray these very words from the cross.

*God, I place my life, my fear, and my future in your hands. Amen.*

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**Wednesday, April 1**

**Philippians 2:5–11**

Jesus does not cling to power. He empties himself. He goes downward before he is lifted up. This is not just the story of Christ; it is the shape of Christian life.

*Jesus, teach me the way of humility and love. Amen.*

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**Maundy Thursday, April 2**

**John 13:1–17, 31b–35**

On the night he is betrayed, first Jesus kneels. He washes feet. He loves. Power stoops. Glory serves. And love becomes a commandment, not a feeling, but a way of life.

*Jesus, teach me to love not in words, but in actions. Amen.*

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**Good Friday, April 3**

**Isaiah 52:13–53:12**

This is the day we do not explain. We do not rush past. We simply stand in awe and behold love crucified. “He was wounded for our transgressions.” The cross is not God’s change of heart; it is the revelation of God’s heart.

*Jesus, thank you for loving me all the way to the cross. Amen.*

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**Holy Saturday, April 4**

**Matthew 27:57–66**

This is the day of waiting. The day when heaven seems quiet and hope feels buried. Yet, Holy Saturday reminds us that waiting is part of faith, perhaps the most important part.

*God, help me trust you even in the silence. Amen.*

It begins in the quiet, in the gray light of early morning, while grief is still heavy and hope feels fragile. The women come to the tomb not expecting miracles, but to tend to death. And that is when heaven interrupts history.

“He is not here; for he has been raised.” The stone is rolled away not so Jesus can get out, but so we can see in. The worst thing is not the last thing. The cross was not the end of the story. Love has done what sin, fear, and death could never do; it has the final word.

And then Jesus does the most Jesus-like thing of all: he meets us on the road and says, “Do not be afraid.” Resurrection is not just something that happened to Jesus.

Resurrection happens both for us and now to us, in our lives, throughout our lives, and at the end of our lives. It is promise and power, possibility and pursuit. Resurrection life becomes our life!

*Christ is risen. And because he lives, hope is never foolish, love is never wasted, and no grave gets the final word. May the God who met you in ashes, who walked with you through wilderness and shadow, and who called you again toward life, now send you into the world with resurrection joy. Go in peace. Live in hope. Walk in love. And know that the risen Christ goes before you always. Amen.*

## LENTEN MIDWEEK WORSHIP

### Ash Wednesday, February 18

6:30-8:30am Drive-In Ashes

12:00pm Imposition of Ashes with Holy Communion

7:00pm Evening Worship with Holy Communion

## MIDWEEK LENTEN WORSHIP SERIES

### *Walking Wet;*

*Living Our Baptism from Ashes to Alleluias*

We don't graduate from baptism. We walk wet each day; claimed by grace, cleaned in water, changed by God's promises, and called to serve God and each other.

### Wednesday, March 4

5:30pm Lenten Dinner/Conversation

7pm Lenten Midweek Worship

“We are Claimed”

### Wednesday, March 11

5:30pm Lenten Dinner/Conversation

7pm Lenten Midweek Worship

“We are Cleaned”

### Wednesday, March 18

5:30pm Lenten Dinner/Conversation

7pm Lenten Midweek Worship

“We are Changed”

### Wednesday, March 25

5:30pm Lenten Dinner/Conversation

7pm Lenten Midweek Worship

“We are Called”



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## HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SERVICES

PALM SUNDAY

MARCH 29TH

9:30AM

MAUNDY THURSDAY

APRIL 2ND

7pm

GOOD FRIDAY

APRIL 3RD

Noon and 7pm

EASTER SUNDAY

APRIL 5TH

9:30am

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