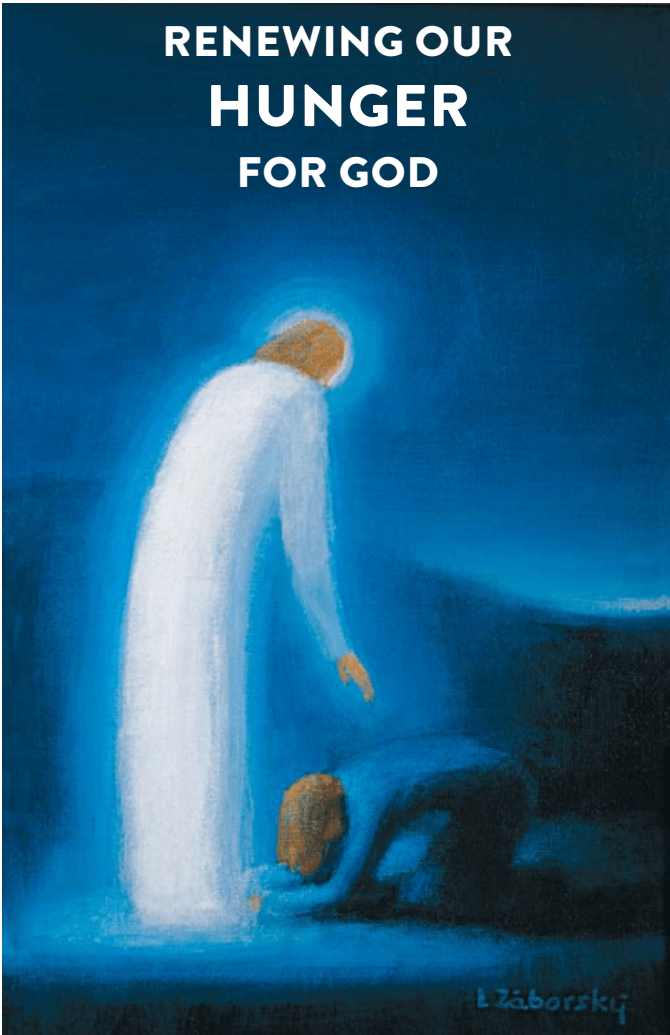


RENEWING OUR
HUNGER
FOR GOD



CHURCH OF THE
SAVIOR

Lent Retreat

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2020

MORNING PRAYER

OPENING SENTENCE

JOEL 2:13

Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil.

Leader: The Lord is full of compassion and mercy:

People: *Come, let us adore him.*

JUBILATE

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands;

serve the Lord with gladness

and come before his presence with a song.

Know this: The Lord himself is God;

he himself has made us, and we are his;

we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;

go into his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and call upon his Name.

For the Lord is good;

his mercy is everlasting;

and his faithfulness endures from age to age.

- ¹ I will exalt you, Lord,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- ² Lord my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
- ³ You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.
- ⁴ Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
- ⁵ For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.
- ⁶ When I felt secure, I said,
“I will never be shaken.”
- ⁷ Lord, when you favored me,
you made my royal mountain[c] stand firm;
but when you hid your face,
I was dismayed.
- ⁸ To you, Lord, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
- ⁹ “What is gained if I am silenced,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?”
- ¹⁰ Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me;
Lord, be my help.”
- ¹¹ You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
- ¹² that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
Lord my God, I will praise you forever.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.*

Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

THE SECOND SONG OF ISAIAH**ISAIAH 55:6-11**

Seek the Lord while he wills to be found; *
call upon him when he draws near.
Let the wicked forsake their ways *
and the evil ones their thoughts;
And let them turn to the Lord, and he will have compassion, *
and to our God, for he will richly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts, *
nor your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, *
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
For as rain and snow fall from the heavens *
and return not again, but water the earth,
Bringing forth life and giving growth, *
seed for sowing and bread for eating,
So is my word that goes forth from my mouth; *
it will not return to me empty;
But it will accomplish that which I have purposed, *
and prosper in that for which I sent it.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.*

COLLECT

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness while it was day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GRACE

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

RENEWING OUR HUNGER FOR GOD

Lenten Silent Retreat February 2020

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

[Then] Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. . . . and he began to teach them. He said:

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

(Matt. 4:1-4, 23; 5:2, 6)

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

(John 6:35)¹

Am I hungry?

All these images of bread, of hunger, of being filled . . . I have to ask myself, am I hungry? And if so, am I hungry for God?

Without judgment, shame or fear, take a moment to assess your current level of hunger for God and his righteousness.

Perhaps you will find that you have a hard time identifying any hunger.

Perhaps you will find that you have a great amount of hunger, but aren't sure what to do with it.

Wherever you find yourself today, provided here are Scripture meditations and spiritual practices on these themes — provided in hopes of helping all of us reconnect with our true spiritual hunger with Jesus, the one and only bread that satisfies.

HUNGER THAT HAS BECOME INCOHERENT

In the following stories, we read of two individuals who have encountered deep pain and unmet desire, and seem to have lost hope in the God who meets us in our need, in our hunger. As you read these stories, imagine yourself in them and using the questions below, talk to God about what you see, hear, touch, think, feel.

JOHN 5:1-9

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed—and they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

RUTH 1:1-20

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, “Can this be Naomi?”

“Don’t call me Naomi (meaning Pleasant),” she told them. “Call me Mara (meaning Bitter), because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What came to mind as you read these stories? Can you identify with either the lame man or Naomi?

Have you experienced unanswered prayer, disillusionment, loss, that has made your hunger for God incoherent?

What might it look like for you to reconnect with these vulnerable spaces with God?

When Hunger Becomes Incoherent:

**RENEWING OUR HUNGER
BY REMEMBERING THE SIGNS**

Often when our hunger has become incoherent, we lose track of the ways God is caring for us, so we stop looking, we stop asking, we give up on God actually being at work in and around us. The following spiritual practices can help to reconnect us to what God is doing, and to others who can help us to see God at work, and in so doing might reestablish our trust in God's goodness, giving us the courage to admit, once more, our need for him.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:15-17

So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

C.S. LEWIS, *THE SILVER CHAIR*

“But, first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters.”²

LUCI SHAW, "SIGNS"

In time of drought, let us be
thankful for this very gentle rain,

a gift not to be disdained
though it is little and brief,

reaching no great depth, barely
kissing the leaves' lips. Think of it as

mercy. Other minor blessings may
show up--tweezers for splinters,

change for the parking meter,
a green light at the intersection,

a cool wind that lifts away summer's
suffocating heat. An apology after

a harsh comment. A word that opens
an unfinished poem like a key in a lock.

LOOK FOR THE SIGNS

Go over this past week in your mind, asking the Spirit to remind you of ways, even insignificant ones, that God cared for you in it. Make a list or create a visual image of these moments.

As you sit with this list, talk to God about what it evokes in you. Gratitude? Guilt or shame? Perhaps you just feel numb. Try to be honest with God about these thoughts and emotions and listen for what invitations he may have for you here.

As you begin to recognize the signs, pray that God will use these to build your trust in him, and your ability to bring to him all that you hunger and thirst for.

LOOK FOR SUPPORT

Although Naomi called herself Mara — Bitter One — she also allowed Ruth to return with her to Israel, and allowed Ruth to take upon herself the task of caring for their newly structured family. And in the end, Ruth and her husband Boaz were used by God to redeem Naomi's pain and more:

So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters.

Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife... and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Ruth 1:22, 2:2-3, 4:13-17

As you've identified the grief, pain, or unanswered prayers that might be masking your underlying hunger, consider who in your life can you tell about this. Who can help carry this with you--in prayer, in action, in emotional support?

Who is already active in your life, helping to carry your burdens? Is there anything keeping you from asking for their help?

What other support might you need to navigate your incoherent hunger? (Oftentimes the help of a professional therapist, spiritual director or pastor can be needed to process pain, grief, and disillusionment. If you are looking for resources such as these, please see one of our retreat leaders today.)

JOURNALING

HUNGER THAT IS NUMBED BY OVERCONSUMPTION

LUKE 6:20-26

Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.
Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil,
because of the Son of Man.

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

“But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received your comfort.
Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will go hungry.
Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.
Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

MATTHEW 19:23-26

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

RECOGNIZE HUNGER

We live in a world of instant gratification and many of us live lives of great abundance wherein we can have what we want, when we want it. So we might pray, as Jesus taught us, “Give us this day, our daily bread,” but we don’t actually worry about that prayer being met. We have our daily bread, and more.

Jesus acknowledges the danger of overconsumption and the way it numbs us to our spiritual hunger. Whether that overconsumption be food, wealth, power, privilege, Jesus warns us that our gluttony of such things gets in the way of our ability to recognize what is our true need, and who is the true source of our life.

The invitation from Jesus is to recognize our hunger, so that we might seek its true satisfaction.

Spend some time prayerfully reflecting on what might be keeping you from recognizing your hunger for God.

Are there things you consume to numb pain, boredom, or grief?

Are there habits of consumption that you have fallen into unaware?

RENEWING OUR HUNGER THROUGH FASTING

JOEL 2:12-13A

“Even now,” declares the Lord,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

Rend your heart
and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love....

AARON DAMIANI, *THE GOOD OF GIVING UP*

When a friend invites you over for dinner, the first way to compliment them is to come hungry. Hunger involves a kind of pain. Your stomach might rumble, your head might ache. Saying no to salty snacks and sweet treats all afternoon might wear you down. Do you keep delaying your gratification until dinner? That depends on whether you trust your friend to cook something good.

If you sneak a PB&J before heading out the door, arrive fashionably late, and pick at your food, you likely did not trust the host to satisfy you at their table. You assumed dinner would be bland, meager, or both. But if you show up at their door truly hungry, pining for dinner to start, going back for seconds and thirds until you're stuffed...you have truly honored your friend. You came hungry and you let them satisfy you.

Jesus has given us an open invitation to come to His house and be satisfied....That is why He referred to Himself as the Bread of Life who satisfies our hunger and the Living water who satisfies our thirst (John 6:22-58; 7:37-39). ... Those who embrace the ...journey of Lent have done so because they trust Jesus is telling the truth about Himself: He is a feast for hungry people. And He was telling the truth about us: we are hungrier than we know.”³

THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

How do you respond to the idea of fasting?

If you have had a good experience of fasting, bring that to mind and reflect on what was satisfying or useful about that practice.

If you have only negative thoughts/feelings, or have had negative experiences fasting, talk to God about this and offer him your honest response.

What one thing could you refrain from consuming during this season of Lent, in an effort to become aware of your hunger for God?

If God is inviting you to fast, spend some time planning for this and ask God to grant you courage, protection, and grace in the practice.

Heavenly Father, you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you: Look upon the heartfelt desires of your humble servants, and stretch forth the strong hand of your Majesty to be our defense against our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

ENDNOTES

¹ All scripture quotations from the NIV, unless otherwise noted. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

² C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair*. New York: Collier Books, 1970. p. 21.

² Aaron Damiani, *The Good of Giving Up: Discovering the Freedom of Lent*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017. p. 74.

JOURNALING

MIDDAY PRAYER

OPENING SENTENCES

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

*Almighty Father, hear our cry
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord Most High,
Whom with the Spirit we adore
For ever and for ever more.*

PSALM 119:105-112

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lantern to my feet
and a light upon my path.

¹⁰⁶ I have sworn and am determined
to keep your righteous judgments.

¹⁰⁷ I am deeply troubled;
preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word.

¹⁰⁸ Accept, O LORD, the willing tribute of my lips,
and teach me your judgments.

¹⁰⁹ My life is always in my hand,
yet I do not forget your law.

¹¹⁰ The wicked have set a trap for me,
but I have not strayed from your commandments.

¹¹¹ Your decrees are my inheritance for ever;
truly, they are the joy of my heart.

¹¹² I have applied my heart to fulfill your statutes
for ever and to the end.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

ROMANS 5:5

The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Thanks be to God.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.*

Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit into our hearts, to direct and rule us according to your will, to comfort us in all our afflictions, to defend us from all error, and to lead us into all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GRACE

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.