

*A Lenten Devotion*  
— Week One —



*Written and compiled by Rev. Brian Elwell*

## ***An Introduction to the Week*** ***— What is Lent —***

In the Scriptures we are taught to give one tenth of our earnings back to God. It is a reminder that all things are not our own; rather, they are a gift from the Lord. Lent is forty days, and within these forty days we focus upon our relationship with God. During this season we are roughly setting aside 10 percent of our year; where we focus directly on growing in Christ.

After being baptized Jesus went off alone into the desert; where he spent forty days asking himself difficult questions, praying, fasting, and even being tempted by the will of the devil. Through these forty days Jesus continually asked, “What does it mean for me to be called Christ, what does it mean for me to be the Son of God?”

During lent, we ask a similar question. We ask, what does it mean to follow Jesus? From that first question there is a second question we must ask, what does it mean to be me?

We look in the mirror during Lent. Imagine staring into a mirror, and while looking into your eyes you ask, “What do I see in the mirror that I most like about myself, what do I see within the mirror that I deplore, and how do I see God staring back at me while looking in the mirror?”

During Lent, we wonder about all sorts of questions. If I only had 25 words left in me what would I say? Is there anything this world, any cause, any belief, that I would be willing to die for? We wonder within these forty days if we would truly live in the ways of Christ or would we prefer to live in the ways of earthly power and wealth? Do we actually believe in God? Yes, we look in the mirror during lent.

Lent is a time of examination. Traditionally, it was the period where the candidate for Baptism learned about the goodness of God, and they prepared themselves to be baptized on Easter.

Some folks give up things for Lent. Maybe that is why chocolate sales are so good for Easter, because a bunch of ravenous chocoholics are able to finally. Other people take on an action. Some deepen their prayer life, others go on more walks, and some decide to read the Bible. I would implore you to either give up or take on a practice that helps you see Jesus better. May you take time to reflect on self, and grow in Christ. May you have a blessed and Holy Lent.

This booklet will be a time of reflection and prayer. Within the booklet you will find a midweek self-guided prayer service. You will find art that causes you to reflect, and you will be invited into a time of confession.

## — A Morning Prayer —

### A Scripture Reading

“By the sweat of your face you will eat bread—  
until you return to the fertile land,  
since from it you were taken;  
you are soil,  
to the soil you will return.”  
— Genesis 3:19

### A Brief Reflection

We are dirt. From the dirt God made people. The Lord formed the dirt, breathed into the dirt, and gave life to the dirt.

Some days we do not think of dirt as very sacred. We use it as a word to describe something that is gross, or not pleasing. We call those things dirty. Some people treat dirt as a waste. As if some dirt is good dirt and other dirt is bad dirt. And yet, God calls all dirt: sacred, blessed, and good.

If we are people made from dirt then we are promised that we will return to dirt. The truest thing about life is that we will die. As the old saying goes, I am assured of two things: taxes and death. We will die, and yet through the power of

Christ death will not have the final say. Rather, through power of Christ love has the final say, and Jesus looks to us full of love and proclaims that death has been defeated.

If you think about it, isn't a strange thing that God put on the skin of dirt. That God became a person, a person who was formed from dirt and given life. It is strange, and yet hopeful, that God loves us so much that our Lord would become “dirty” in order to restore all of the dirt-people (dirt-people is the actual Hebrew for human).

So, it may be scary to think about our mortality, our returning to dirt, but I hope that you can find assurance in God. I pray that you will know the hope that can only be found through a Jesus who loves people so much that he would restore them to the fullness of life.

This week take some time and knock yourself down a notch or two. Remember the most humbling and hopeful fact about yourself— that you are dirt. And yet, though you are dirt, you are resurrected with Christ.

## **A Prayer from the Dirt**

*Created by Sarah Rosado*

O Great Creator,  
from the depths of the earth,  
we humbly rise, a prayer from the soil,  
the very foundation of life.  
May we be nourished by your abundant grace,  
as the seeds are nourished by the rain,  
and may our roots reach deep into your love,  
allowing us to grow strong and bear fruit in your service.

Guide our hands as we tend to this land,  
reminding us that all life comes from you,  
and to you we return.  
In Christ we pray. Amen.



## **A Confession and Blessing**

Why do we confess? As a people we must remember one great truth— we need God! Our Lord hears our pains, our God sees the ways we fail in love, our Jesus knows our hurts, and in it all God redeems. We are called to come to Jesus and give it all back to God.

Confession is a way that we live into a fruitful relationship with our Lord. It is the practical way of bearing it all before our grace-filled God. In confession we experience relationship, there is an intimacy that is experienced when confessing your sins to God. Through grace God always forgives and makes a way to live into fruitfulness with our Lord.

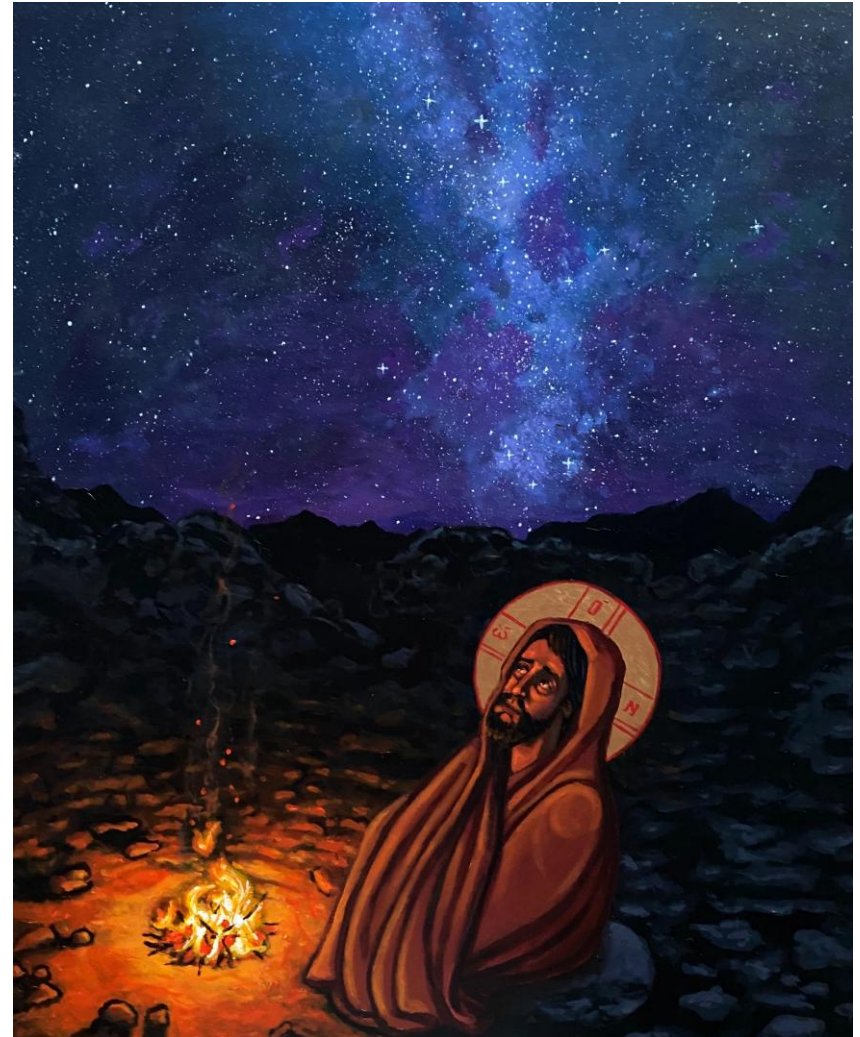
I invite you into a prayer of confession and to reflect upon the prompt. May Christ meet you in this time.

## **A Prayer of Confession**

O Lord, you are our shepherd,  
And yet we want.  
We lie down when we could act,  
We stir the pot when we could offer peace,  
We wander tempting paths instead of following you.  
We see courage and comfort in earthly things rather than in you.  
We hate our enemies and refuse to break bread with them,  
We see scarcity even when you offer us abundance.  
We pray for forgiveness, for your goodness and mercy,  
So that we might dwell in You, in your grace, forever. Amen.

### **A Reflection Question**

In Luke 4:1-13, the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, to take control of the kingdoms of the world, and to perform a spectacular stunt that would “wow the crowd.” Jesus refused to take control in these ways. Instead, Jesus chose another way to feed hungry people, to demonstrate what the kingdom of God looks like, and to enter Jerusalem humbly. Why do you think Jesus chose another way to “do justice” and what are some ways that you and your faith community practice justice in Jesus’ name?



“Jesus in the Desert,” By Kelly Latimore