

A is for Ashes

**Praying Through
Lent from A to Z**

Ash Wednesday

A is for Ashes

You are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3:19

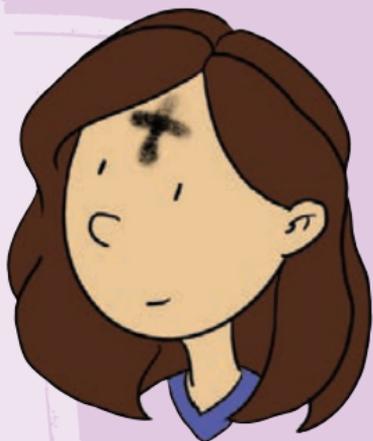
Is this really how our ABC journey begins, Lord Jesus? With ASHES? Ashes on my forehead that point to ashes deeper inside of me? Ashes seem like an ending, not a beginning.

I am made of ashes, I know. Your word reminds me of that simple fact. And to ashes I will someday return.

It's just that it seems an awfully awful way to begin our journey. But ... well, it is a journey to your cross—to your death. So I suppose beginning with a reminder of MY death is the right way to begin.

We start with ashes, MY ashes—a reminder that I am in need of saving from the death that awaits me. I need a savior.

Good thing I am making this journey with you, my Savior! Amen.



Thursday after Ash Wednesday

A is for Adam & Eve

The woman took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband...

Genesis 3:6

The problem with sin is an old one, isn't it, Lord Jesus?

It goes back to a garden where a couple of naughty children listened to a slippery snake rather than listening to their loving Father.

I'd like to blame those two for my sin problem, Jesus. But it's no good playing the blame game. I am just as guilty as they ever were. Yesterday's ashes proved that. I'm dirty with sin.

I'm sorry, Lord.

Lead me on this Lenten journey to your cross, where I can look and see your loving forgiveness. There you wash my dirty sin away. Amen.



Friday after Ash Wednesday

B is for Bruise

He will strike your head, and you will bruise his heel. Genesis 3:15

My dirty sinfulness goes all the way back to the garden of Eden, Lord Jesus.

But look how far back your cleansing promises go! All the way back to the garden as well!

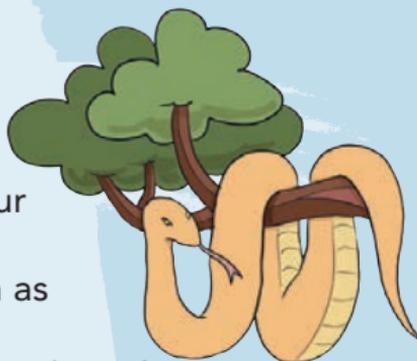
You would have nothing to do with the blame game that Adam and Eve insisted on playing:

"She told me to eat it ..."

"No, it's that slippery snake's fault ..."

You went beyond blame to the promise of a plan. You promised that some day that old snake would get his head crushed and that sin would be nipped in the bud.

But it would cost you a bruise, wouldn't it, Lord Jesus? Worse than a bruise ... it would cost you a cross—to which I am following you this Lent. Lead me from sinfulness to your promised salvation. Amen.



Saturday after Ash Wednesday

B is for Boat

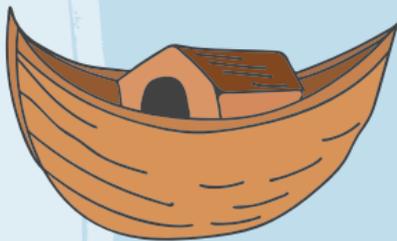
*The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. **Genesis 7:18***

When sinfulness had so infected humans, you decided that destruction was the answer.

But not all of humanity was destroyed, Lord. Inside the ark, Noah and his family were buoyed up upon the destructive waters. You kept them safe.

When raging waters threatened to destroy your disciples on the Sea of Galilee, you shouted, "Peace!" and "Be still!" You kept your disciples safe too.

Keep me safe, Lord Jesus, when I feel threatened by any sort of "rough waters" I sense in my day-to-day life. Buoy me up and whisper "peace" in my ear. Amen.



C is for Caravan

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country ... to the land that I will show you."

Genesis 12:1

You called to Abraham and he listened, Lord! He uprooted himself and his family and drove his herds half a world away to the land that you would show him.

I've heard the phrase "a leap of faith." Abraham displayed no simple jump, but an entire CARAVAN of faith.

How strong is my faith, Lord? Will I follow you wherever you lead? Even to the cross?

I will. Because I know your promise. You promise to lead me BEYOND the cross, to everlasting life.

I believe! Help my unbelief. Amen.



C is for Covenant

"Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then the Lord said to Abram, "So shall your descendants be." Genesis 15:5

Your promises to Abraham were scribbled on paper or even sealed in stone. Your promises to Abraham were written in the heavens, Lord Jesus. "Look at the stars," you told him on that clear desert night. "Count them if you can." Could he, Lord? Could Abraham's old mind even begin to grasp the number of stars his old eyes were taking in? "That's how many grandchildren I will give you!"

Your promises are BIG, Lord Jesus! As big as the whole night sky. As big as the world's biggest family. As big as forever and ever, amen—which happens to be where you are ultimately leading ME. And so I thank you, my promise-making, promise-keeping Lord! Amen.



Tuesday of the First Week

D is for Donkey

God said to Abraham, "Take your son ... whom you love and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering ..." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took ... his son Isaac ...

Genesis 22:2-3

What is this, Lord Jesus? Abraham had waited for a son. And now, after all these years ... after all of your promises ... you are commanding Abraham to offer up his beloved son as a sacrifice?!

Fortunately, I know how this story turns out. You would stop Abraham before Isaac could be sacrificed. Another sacrifice—a ram—would be provided in Isaac's place. Whew!

But I also know about another story—a bigger story—in which another beloved Son's sacrifice is NOT stopped. You were sacrificed in my place, Lord Jesus. You are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.



Wednesday of the First Week

D is for Dream

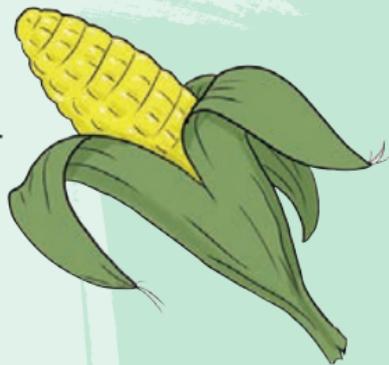
*Joseph said to his brothers, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." **Genesis 37:6-7***

Joseph's dream would come true, Lord Jesus. But it would take a long time for the dream to come true.

Joseph's brothers would sell him into slavery out of their angry jealousy. He would be taken to Egypt in chains. He would end up in prison even! Yikes!

But then Joseph would begin to interpret dreams—even the dreams of the Pharaoh. Pharaoh would promote Joseph to be a prince of Egypt. And Joseph's brothers would indeed bow before him.

You had special plans for your child Joseph, Lord Jesus. What are your plans for me? Amen.



Thursday of the First Week

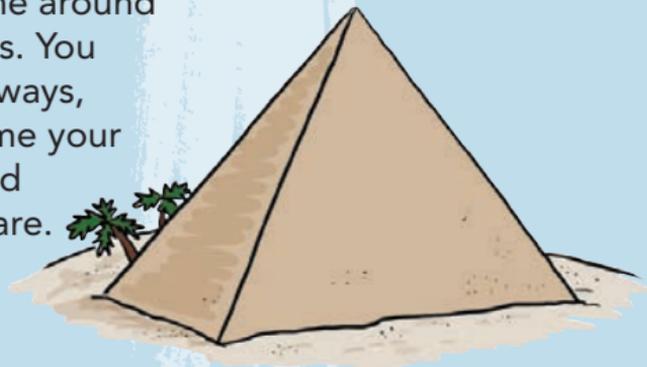
E is for Egypt

God said, "Jacob, Jacob. I am the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I myself will go down with you to Egypt." **Genesis 46:2-4**

What wonderful news you had for your special child Jacob, Lord Jesus. You promised that you would be with him, even in a far-off land.

Jacob was old and might have been scared to travel away from the land you had promised to his grandfather, Abraham, and to his father, Isaac. But your love and care are not tied to any one place. Your love and care follow your children around.

You follow me around too, Lord Jesus. You are with me always, quick to give me your always love and your forever care. Amen.



Friday of the First Week

E is for Enslaved

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. **Exodus 1:8-9, 11**

Oh, no! Your special children, the Israelites, have been enslaved in Egypt! Can this be part of your plan, Lord Jesus?



It IS part of your plan. Even in their slavery, you are keeping the promise you made to Jacob. You are still with your people, even during their suffering.

Remind me of that, Lord Jesus, whenever I am enduring any sort of suffering—whether it is bullying or sickness or plain old sadness. Remind me that you are with me, even in my suffering. No ... especially in my suffering. Amen.

F is for Fire

The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ...God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" **Exodus 3:2-4**

You spoke to Moses out of a burning bush, Lord Jesus. How do you speak to me?

You certainly speak to me through your Word, the Bible. In it I can learn of your saving love for all the world. I can also learn your teachings so I can live a God-pleasing life.

You certainly speak to me in your own life, Lord Jesus. If I watch you, the Living Word, I can know what God has to say to me.

You certainly speak to me from your cross, Lord Jesus. There I can see your saving love, plain as day.

Speak to me, Lord Jesus. Speak through me, too, to share your saving love. Amen.



Second Sunday in Lent

F is for Freedom

Miriam sang to the people: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

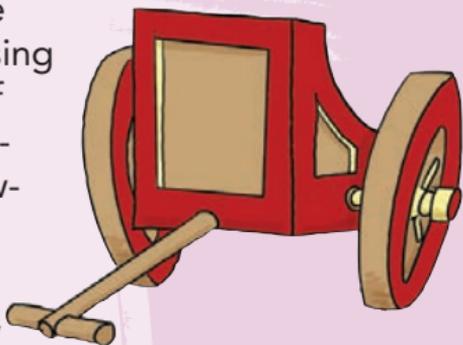
Exodus 15:21

Your special people, the Jews, would continue to sing this song for thousands of years. They would remember your great saving power shown to them on the shore of the Red Sea. You led them through the sea, Lord Jesus, out of slavery. When the Pharaoh and his army tried to follow, they were drowned.

Freedom! Yippie!

You give freedom, Lord Jesus. On the night you were betrayed, you were celebrating this very same Old Testament freedom. But you were bringing a brand new freedom too. Freedom from sin, death and the devil.

For all your wonderful freedom I thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.



F is for Forty Years

The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. Exodus 16:35

Forty years! What a long time to wait, wandering in the wilderness, before your special people could enter your promised land.

Although ...

Well, YOU had to wait much longer, didn't you, Lord Jesus? The promises made way back in the Garden of Eden ... the promises made to Abraham under the midnight sky ... the promises made to Moses and so many others ... would not find their final fulfillment until you suffered and died on your cross ...

... and rose again to give eternal life to all of your special people.

As I wait forty days for Easter to finally come, remind me of your wait, Lord Jesus, to fulfill your promises. Amen.



Tuesday of the Second Week

G is for Glee

The people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall of Jericho fell down flat.

Joshua 6:20

What a happy day for your people, Lord Jesus! With the blast of trumpets and a thundering shout, the mighty walls of Jericho were reduced to rubble.

YOU destroyed the city, Lord, by your great and mysterious might! The promised land was finally being given to your special people. What a happy day!

Do I show my happiness for all of your mighty (and sometimes mysterious) goodness to me? Do I shout with happiest glee?

Today I do, Lord Jesus! You are my Lord and Savior, my living, giving God. YIPPIE! Amen.



G is for Giant

When Goliath drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. 1 Samuel 17:48-49

David was just a little boy when you gave him the strength to bring down the great giant Goliath, Lord Jesus.

What great things can you do through little me?

Teach me and guide me to be all you have planned for me. Amen.



Thursday of the Second Week

H is for Hosanna

The crowds that went ahead of Jesus and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" **Matthew 21:9**

When you entered Jerusalem, Lord Jesus, the people lauded you with highest praise: "Hosanna to the Son of David."

That IS high praise, Lord Jesus. The people knew exactly how flattering such praise was, for David had been their greatest king. And God had promised that his throne would endure forever and ever.

YOU are the rightful heir to that throne. You ARE the Son of David. You are the Son of God. You will reign for all eternity.

You are my King, Jesus.
"Hosanna!" Amen.



H is for Holy Place

Solomon decided to build a temple for the name of the Lord, and a royal palace for himself. Solomon conscripted seventy thousand laborers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country, with three thousand six hundred to oversee them. 2 Chronicles 2:1-2

What a magnificent house Solomon must have built for you, Lord Jesus. So many workers helped to build it. There were three thousand six hundred supervisors alone. Wow!

Still, I know that no house can hold you, no matter how grand.

And so I find it wonderful (and humbling) to know that you want to live in my heart, Lord Jesus—to make my own body the temple of your Holy Spirit.

Live in me, Lord Jesus. Live through me too. Make my heart a fitting temple. Amen.



I is for Idols

Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made. Isaiah 2:8

Shame on them, Lord Jesus. Your special people were turning away from you. Again and again they turned from you, their loving, saving, living Lord, to worthless idols made of gold. Didn't they know that idols aren't worth worshiping?

Don't I?

I don't worship a golden idol, Lord Jesus. But I do put all sorts of things ahead of you at different times in my life. Things like popularity ... and money ... and success ... and even grades.

I am so sorry, Lord, when other "idols" take your place in my life. I want to live my life for you ... because you gave your life for me. Amen.



I is for Invasion

In the ninth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the tenth month, ... King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 Kings 25:1

It's an invasion, Lord Jesus! Your people had disobeyed you for the last time, and you sent a mighty king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, to teach them your most holy lesson.

The covenant was broken. Your people were suffering because of their foolish disobedience.

How do I suffer because of my foolish disobedience, Lord? How do I suffer because of my sin? I know that selfishness can drive my friends away. I know that lying can make me an untrustworthy child. I know that my guilt can make me feel far from you when you want me to be close. Invade my heart with your forgiveness, Lord. Keep me from sinning. Amen.



J is for Jaws

Daniel said to the king, "... My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me." Daniel 6:21-22

Daniel was in a far-off land, Lord Jesus. He had been taken captive after the invasion of Jerusalem. The promised land was far away, and the covenant was broken.

But you were still with him, Lord Jesus! You could not be confined to the temple or to Jerusalem or even to the promised land. Your promises are bigger than places.

In the dark and dangerous lions' den, you were with Daniel. You shut their ravenous jaws and shut down his doubting fears.

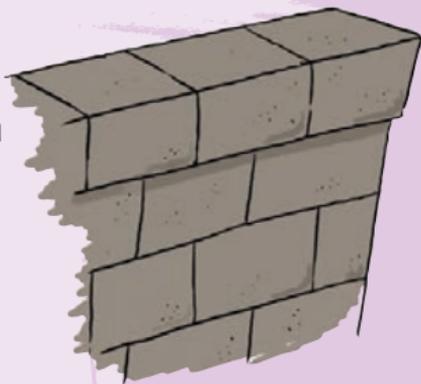
You are with me, no matter what ... no matter where. Comfort me with your constant presence. You are here. Amen.



J is for Jerusalem

*The burden bearers carried their loads in such a way that each labored on the work of building the wall with one hand and with the other held a weapon. **Nehemiah 4:17***

You did not forget your special people, Lord Jesus. After a time in captivity, you led them back to Jerusalem and they rebuilt the city. Nehemiah was in charge of the rebuilding. His workers labored with weapons in one hand and tools in the other. What determination they had.



I know that it is sometimes true that losing something for a while can make me appreciate it more. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," I've heard it said.

A psalmist put it another way: "My soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen wait for the morning" (130:6). When I feel far from you, make my soul long for you as well, with a steady, happy determination. Amen.

Wednesday of the Third Week

K is for Killing Time

And it came to pass in those days ... Luke 2:1

Four hundred years passed after the last prophet spoke your Word, Lord Jesus. There was a long period of silence. Did your people wonder if God had left them alone?

Four hundred years is a long time sit around waiting ... to sit around with "time to kill."

But you weren't simply killing time, Lord Jesus. You were waiting for the time to be ripe—for kingdoms to rise and fall, for peace to spread throughout the Mediterranean, for good roads to be built, for a special young woman named Mary to meet a carpenter named Joseph ...

Time was approaching when your silence would end and the world would find out that God has a LOT to say! Amen.



Thursday of the Third Week

K is for Kings

Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." Matthew 2:1-2

How long was their journey, and when did they start, these kings, Lord Jesus? Did the star begin its shining even before your birth so that they could get to you in time? Months before? Or even a year or more?

What wonderful kings these are—persistent and determined—to see you and to worship you at such expense of wealth and time and energy.

Am I as willing—persistent and determined—to see and worship you, my Lord? Forgive me when I am not, and give me the worshiping heart of these kings. Amen.



Friday of the Third Week

L is for Little Lambs

The shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." Luke 2:15

I like to think that some little lambs followed the shepherds to your manger that night, Lord Jesus. That's what little lambs do, after all—they follow shepherds.

Do I? You are my Shepherd—my GOOD Shepherd. Do I follow you the way I ought to ... every day in every way?

I know I don't always follow as I should. I sin in things I do and say ... even in ways that I think.

Which is exactly why you, my Good Shepherd, came to earth in the first place—to take my sin away. That's what the Lamb of God does, after all. Amen.



Saturday of the Third Week

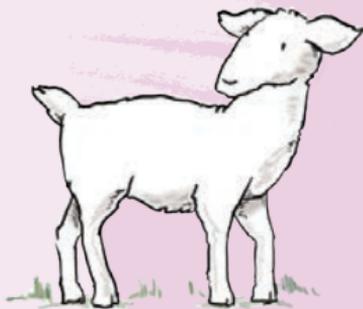
L is for Lamb of God

John saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" **John 1:29**

What John said about you sounds like such an excited compliment that I almost forget what a scary thing it is, Lord Jesus.

He called you the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That means that you are a SACRIFICE, Lord Jesus. Your job is to die so that your blood can atone for my sin.

That's why you came. That's why I'm following you to your cross this Lent, my holy Lamb of God. Amen.



Fourth Sunday in Lent

M is for Monster

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

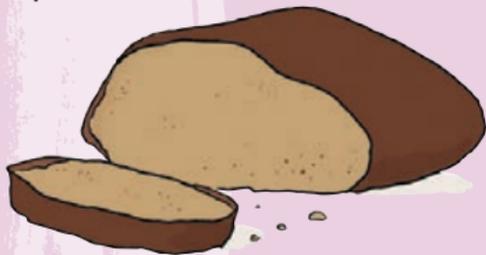
Matthew 4:1

That monster was after you, Lord Jesus. The devil, I mean. He was trying to tempt you to sin—to draw attention to yourself and to use your power in selfish, evil ways.

You would not flinch! His temptations bounced off you like ping-pong balls off a paddle.

You are pure and holy, Lord. You are strong enough to stand up to the devil ... to temptation ... to sin.

Lead me not into temptation, Lord. Deliver me from evil. And when I am feeling stuck in my sin, remind me of your forgiving love. Amen.



Monday of the Fourth Week

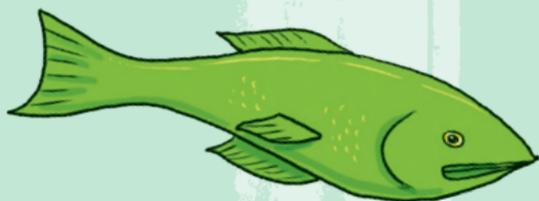
M is for Ministry

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Matthew 4:17

Lord Jesus, you walked out of your wilderness temptation and directly into your ministry. And look what you had to say: "Turn around!" (That's what repent means.) "God's kingdom is right behind you!"

That's good news—that God is as close as ... well, as YOU! You are God, and you have come to bring the love and forgiveness of God to everyone, everywhere.

Help me in each day of my life to continue the ministry you started—to announce the nearness of your kingdom, your forgiveness and your love in all I say and do. Amen.



Tuesday of the Fourth Week

M is for Mountain

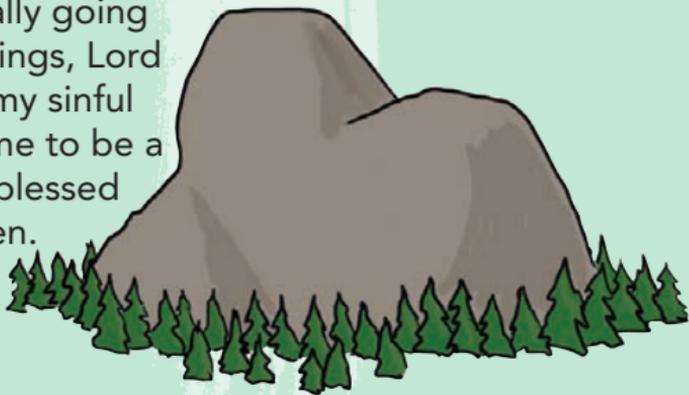
When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:1-3

Up on a mountain you began to preach, Lord Jesus, proclaiming the happy word "Blessed!" to the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourning, the hungry and thirsty and persecuted.

What good news for such needy people (like me, sometimes). What upside-down news too! In your kingdom, the sad will be happy, the poor will be rich, the downtrodden will be uplifted!

You are really going to change things, Lord Jesus, even my sinful heart. Help me to be a part of your blessed change! Amen.



N is for New

There was a leper who came to Jesus ... saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 8:2-3

This is what you have come to do, Lord Jesus. You have come to make people NEW!

The poor leper certainly found that out! The first miracle recorded by St. Matthew has a man broken by a terrible disease made new by your powerful love.

As we get closer to your cross this Lent, I am reminded that making people new is what you were doing through your suffering and death as well. You make all things new, Lord Jesus—even ME! Amen.



Thursday of the Fourth Week

N is for News

Jesus sent out the twelve with the following instructions: "... As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'" Matthew 10:5, 7

The news was too good to be shared by just one individual, wasn't it, Lord Jesus? The word had to get out—had to be broadcast to every town ... every city ... everyone. And so you sent out your twelve disciples to spread the good, good news:



"Extra! Extra! Read all about it! 'God's Kingdom Comes Close!'"

How do you send me out each day, Lord Jesus, to spread your good, good news? Open my eyes to see new opportunities to share your Word. Open my mouth to shout the happy news! Amen.

O is for “Oh, No!”

But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Jesus, how to destroy him.

Matthew 12:14

Oh, no, Lord Jesus! How can this be? These religious leaders, the Pharisees, are angry with you—so angry that they want to KILL you.

They should be listening to you, Lord Jesus, not trying to trick you.

They should be following you, Lord Jesus, not working against you.

They should be worshipping you, Lord Jesus, not conspiring against you.

Teach me to listen to you. Teach me to follow you. Teach me to worship you. Amen.



Saturday of the Fourth Week

P is for Parable

Jesus told the crowds many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow." Matthew 13:2-3

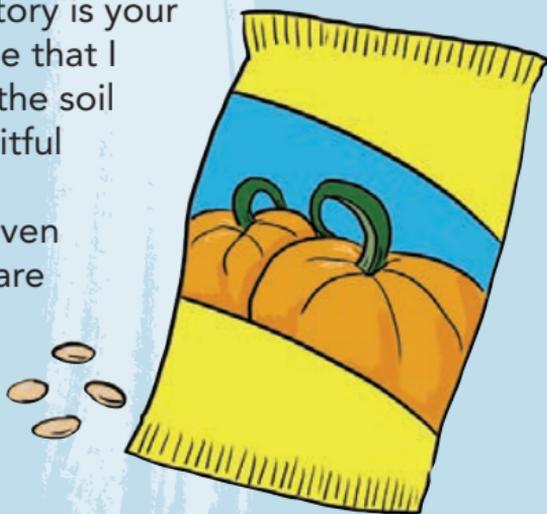
You are such a good teacher, Lord Jesus. Your stories make your students think and bring your lessons to life—"living lessons" is what they are ... and lessons for my living!

Your first parable was about a farmer who cast seed out into his field. Nothing came of some of the seed, but some sprang up and grew to be strong and fruitful.

The seed in the story is your Word, I know. I hope that I am the good soil—the soil that produced a fruitful crop.

Even this Lent—even this very day—you are planting your Word in me, Lord, with your wonderful parables. Make me fruitful!

Amen.



P is for Prodigal

The father said, "Get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

Luke 15:22-24

Prodigal means "extravagantly wasteful," Lord Jesus. And the son in your parable was certainly that. He wasted all the money his father had given him.

But the father was prodigal too, Lord. He was "extravagantly wasteful" with his forgiving love.

So are you, my Savior. You are so prodigal with your grace that you poured out even your own blood ... for me. Amen.



Q is for “Quiet!”

Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” Matthew 16:23

When you predicted your own death, Peter was shocked, Lord Jesus. “NO!” he said. “This cannot happen!”

“Quiet!” you said. “You’re thinking about what YOU want ... not what GOD wants.” Lord Jesus, you needed to die so that the plan to save the world could be brought to its conclusion.

Quiet me down, Lord Jesus, when I start thinking (and talking ... and acting) about what I want over and above what you want for me. Let me be still and know that you are God. Amen.



R is for Resurrection

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Matthew 16:21

Lord Jesus, I can understand why Peter didn't want these things to happen. They sound terrible ... and he loved you, as do I.

But I can also see that every time you mention your upcoming suffering and death, you also mention something else—your RESURRECTION.

You knew the cost of what you were doing—pain, embarrassment and a criminal's cross.

But you knew the end result of what you were doing. You never took your eyes off the result: your resurrection ... and my own.

Keep my eyes on the empty tomb too. Amen.



Wednesday of the Fifth Week

R is for Right Behind You

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." Matthew 16:24-25

I want to find life, Lord Jesus!
And though the way seems difficult (a cross ... and even LOSING my life are involved, you say), I will follow you.

I am right behind you,
my Savior! Amen.



S is for Sin

If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine ... and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

Matthew 18:12-13

This sheep ran away, Lord Jesus—ran away from YOU, his Good Shepherd.

I know I do that too—sometimes on a daily basis. I think it will be more fun to “leave the fold and the other ninety-nine” and do my own thing. The problem is that I, like that silly, sinful sheep, always end up lost—trapped in the brambles. Oh, the trouble my sinfulness gets me into!

Thankfully, you are my GOOD Shepherd. You not only forgive my sin, but you seek me out and save me from the trouble I get myself into. Help me to follow you, my Shepherd, faithfully. Amen.



Friday of the Fifth Week

T is for Transfiguration

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Matthew 17:1-3

Look at you, Lord Jesus! You're shining, bright as the sun! Moses and Elijah are with you—the two ancient prophets who saw God face to face. They're looking at God face to face right now because they know that YOU are God.

I know that too, Lord Jesus. You are MY God. Shine your loving light through me, my living Lord. Amen.



U is for Unforgiving

Then the lord of the unforgiving slave summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?" **Matthew 18:32-33**

You told this parable, Lord Jesus, of a slave who had been shown great mercy by his lord but who then refused to show any mercy to a fellow slave.

How unforgiving he was, Lord Jesus. And how **WRONG** his actions were. Didn't the mercy shown to him make him want to become more merciful?

What about me? Has the grace you have shown me made me into a more grace-full person? Fill me with grace, Lord Jesus—grace that overflows into all of my living. Amen.



U is for UP!

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of Jesus and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" **Matthew 21:8-9**

Up went the hands, Lord Jesus, raised in praise.
Up went the voices, shouting loud hosannas. Up
went the palms, waving in lively joy. Down went
the cloaks, preparing a royal highway for the coming King.

I lift up my hands, my voice, my LIFE to you,
Lord Jesus. You are my King! Amen.



V is for Vexed

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers."

Matthew 21:12-13

Vexed means "angry," Lord Jesus. And look how very vexed you are! You are on a rampage, flipping tables over and driving people out of the temple. You called those people robbers, Lord. They were littering up your Father's house with their greed. You HAD to clean things up ... and you did a thorough job.

I suppose your job—the entire reason you came to live with us—is to clean things up. You came to clean up all sin, death and power of the devil. And you did a thorough job! Amen.



Tuesday of Holy Week

W is for Washing

During supper Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

John 13:3-5

This is not something YOU should be doing, Lord Jesus! You are the Master, not the servant. Washing the feet of the guests is a servant's job.

But you came to be a servant, didn't you? You came with complete humility to wash away all sin. You came to show us how to serve one another, too.

Give me a happy servant's heart, my Master!
Amen.



W is for Wonder Bread

*Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." **Matthew 26:26-28***

I know another company claims to sell "Wonder Bread" in my local supermarket. But this is the real deal, Lord Jesus!

I read this verse ... I look at the bread you offer ... and stare in slack-jawed wonder and wide-eyed awe. This isn't just bread you are giving the disciples. You are giving YOURSELF to the disciples ... and to ME!

Which I think is wonderful! Amen.



X is for **cross-eXamine**

Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death.

Matthew 26:59

THEY are putting YOU on trial, Lord Jesus?! How absurd! You are the King and Judge of the whole world. They are priests—dedicated to the service of the One True God. Yet here they are, cross-examining the One True God—a cross-examination that will eventually lead to your CROSS!



Am I ever guilty of the same thing, Lord Jesus—of questioning you and your love for me? Of putting your steadfast kindness on trial? When things don't go my way, or I'm having a difficult time, do I cross-examine your good intentions ... your promises?

Keep me faithful, my King. Never let me doubt your love. Let me examine your cross ... and be certain of your love. Amen.

Good Friday

X is for eXecution

Two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Matthew 27:38-40

I know this day has been coming, Lord Jesus. I've known all Lent long that we've been using the alphabet as a way to journey to this destination: your cross.

The two bandits remind me that you not only suffered death to take away my sins, Lord. You suffered an execution! You must have looked so guilty—you, who are completely guiltless.

I am the guilty one. You died like a criminal to take my guilt away. How can I ever thank you enough, my Lord? Amen.



Holy Saturday

Y is for YES!

It is Christ Jesus, who died, YES, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Romans 8:34

You were handed over to evil men, Lord Jesus, just as you promised you would be.

You were put on trial by them, Lord Jesus, just as you promised you would be.

You underwent great suffering at their hands, Lord Jesus, just as you promised you would be.

And you died, just as you promised you would, Lord Jesus.

You made another promise, Lord Jesus—that you would be raised from death.

And yet another ... that I would be raised from my death too.

Will your promises come true? With St. Paul, I shout the answer: "YES!" Amen.



Easter Sunday

Z is for Zip-a-dee-doo!

As the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" **Matthew 28:1-9**

