

Lenten Season Devotionals 2024



11th Episcopal District Christian Education

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Presiding Prelate

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Day 1

GOD KEPT ME!

*Bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure—
you, the righteous God who probes minds and hearts. Psalm 7:9 (NIV)*

The ninth Psalm by David is a song of praise and thanksgiving.

The Lord was his refuge from oppression and depression.

The Lord was his safe place in times of trouble.

Has the Lord ever kept you?

Has the Lord ever been your refuge when you felt oppressed?

In your times of trouble, has the Lord ever provided you with a safe place where you could heal, recover and overcome the attacks of your spiritual and physical enemies?

As we move from the Ash Wednesday to Resurrection Sunday, we are reminded that God kept Jesus in the face of betrayal and the brokenness of the cross. On the cross, dying, because of the betrayal of his disciples, the treachery of his spiritual-political adversaries, and feeling forsaken by his Divine Parent—Jesus last words were: Father, into your hands, I commit My Spirit.

JESUS KNEW THAT GOD WOULD KEEP HIS PROMISE; THE PROMISE OF RESURRECTION.

Lenten season 2024 is your season to declare, believe and receive: The Lord...will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble!

God kept the David!

God Kept Jesus.

God will keep you!

YOUR VICTORY STARTS HERE!

***Prayer:** God, we thank You for keeping us when we thought we could not be kept. You have proven Yourself to be a very present help in the time of trouble. Help us to have an awareness of Your Mighty hand in our life. In the mighty and miraculous name of Jesus. Amen.*

Bishop Frank Madison Reid. III
Presiding Prelate of the 11th Episcopal District
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Day 2

The Agony of Separation

*Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy,
and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. Psalm 43:4 (ESV)*

Lent is often described as a time of preparation and an opportunity to go deeper with God. It is a time for personal reflection that prepares our hearts and minds for Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. On Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, ashes imposed on our forehead in the sign of the cross symbolize our grief for the things we have done wrong and the resulting separation of imperfect people from a perfect God.

Our devotion for today speaks of king David being driven from the holy city of Jerusalem by his rebellious son Absalom and his renegade army. Once outside the holy city, and on the run, David realized his inability to worship in the temple, the place where thy honor dwelleth. David realized in that moment that being separated from worshiping God in the temple was far greater than being captured by his enemies. Therefore, David cries out to the LORD to give him safe passage back to the holy city of Jerusalem. Many years later, Jesus experienced separation from God in the garden of Gethsemane, and it terrified him, "Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done."

Like David and Jesus, many of us have experienced the agony, desperation, and loneliness of being separated from God. During this season of Lent, as you seek to go deeper with God, I challenge and encourage you to be like David, go to God's holy hill, the altar, with exceeding joy and thanksgiving and praise God from whom all blessings flow for the privilege of being connected to his body.

Prayer: *O God, we acknowledge we have not been as faithful to you as we should. We thank you for not casting us aside and your light that shines in the darkness to lead us back to you. In Jesus name. Amen.*

The Reverend Dr. Paula Lake

11th Episcopal District Christian Education Director

Day 3

BABA YAGA: THE BOOGEYMAN SLAYER

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

When I was a little girl, my big brother, Mikey, loved to frighten his sisters by telling us stories about “The Boogeyman”. These stories would frighten me so that I would sleep with the lights on. When our grandmother complained about me running up her electricity bill and would shut the lights off, I turned on my flashlight which provided me with great comfort. I felt safe from the dark and safe from the Boogeyman who dwells in the darkness. As an adult, I am still frightened by things that cause me to sleep with the lights on. But I’m not the only one. Am I? We all have phobias in our lives. We all have things that cause us to sleep with that metaphoric light on. We all need a Baba Yaga¹, the One who comes to slay the Boogeyman.

While fear may at times feel as if it is a constant companion, our faith reminds us that God has invited us to cast our cares on God for God’s presence is with us ... always. God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. God’s command to us, “...fear not...”, assures us that God has our backs and will fight the Boogeyman who have invaded the darkness of our lives. God then becomes the Baba Yaga, if we allow it. Further, God has promise to strengthen and sustain us as we move through situations in our lives that invoke fear. If we trust God to fight the boogeyman of our lives, we will discover that God is faithful and more than sufficient. And we are assured that God is a promise keeper. Just as my flashlight made me feel secure in the darkness, so will God’s presence for God is our light in the darkness.

***Prayer:** Promise Keeper; we are sorry for all those times that fear replaced faith in our hearts. We ask that You forgive us and help us to cast our cares on You, no matter what we face during this season of penitence. Endow us with the presence of Your precious Holy Spirit that will cause us to summon the courage and conviction to starve our fears and feed our faith. In Jesus’ name. Amen!*

The Reverend Dr. Missouri McPhee
Executive Secretary
Board of Christian Education
11th Episcopal District | AME Church

¹ Baba Yaga is the nickname given to the lead character in John Wick by the Russian mob. The Baba Yaga is the one who slays the Boogeyman. The one who destroys all that is evil.

Day 4

BEAUTIFUL PROMISE

In Isaiah 54:10, God gives us his beautiful promise of compassion, “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.” The love of your heavenly Father is steadfast and immovable.

God’s love is different than the love of others. God wants us to build our spiritual foundation on his unconditional love and compassion. God longs to establish our relationship upon his love and grace. It was God’s compassion for us that drove him to send His son Jesus to his death on the cross. It was God’s love for us that led him to search us out when sin had wedged a great bridge between us.

And it’s God’s compassion that drives him even now to pour out his unfathomable love and affection over us. As believers, we are reminded that we are redeemed, forgiven, anointed, a new creature and sealed by God. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. *“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” Psalm 103:8 (NIV)*

Prayer – *Heavenly Father, thank you for your presence and allowing me to speak with an open heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for your spirit to preach, teach, and exhort your word unto your people. Thank you, Heavenly Father for your steadfast and immovable love.*

The Reverend Dr. Rhella P. Murdaugh
11th Episcopal District Christian Education Curriculum Chair

Day 5

Finding Joy in Trials

"My brothers and sisters, whenever you face various trials, consider it all joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance." James 1:2-3

The marathon runner develops endurance through rigorous training. The runner experiences joy after crossing the finish line. Like a muscle that becomes strong when it faces resistance from a weight, Believers develop spiritual strength and stamina by facing trials and testing their faith. Believers can expect challenges to their faith to come in many unexpected ways.

James, the brother of Jesus and writer of the text (James 1:2-3), speaks of these unexpected challenges. By referring to 'trials of various kinds,' James is likely referring to the community sufferings of the Jewish people under Roman rule and wealthy landowners that caused religious persecution, financial exploitation, and resulting in poverty. But James also may be writing vaguely enough to ensure that his words apply to those experiencing trials of other forms—physical pain, sickness, death of loved ones, and other personal hardships.

It is important to note that trials can and do come to faithful Believers and healthy churches. Believers should not be surprised when they face trials. Trials will come, and God aims to use those trials to mature His churches and His people.

***Prayer:** O Lord, we understand through the scriptures that God intends life's difficulties to refine our faith: heating it in the crucibles of suffering so that our impurities might be refined through You. And so that we might become pure and valuable before the Lord. And the testing of faith here, then, is not intended to determine whether we are a faith believer or not; it is intended to purify faith that already exists. Therefore, we accept that we find joy in our trials and tests. Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Reverend Reginald Johnson
11th Episcopal District Church School Superintendent

Day 6

Anointed For Burial

6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. 8 But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? 9 For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor....." Matthew 26:6-13 (NKJV)

During this passage, Jesus is lodging at the house of Simon who the Bible refers to as a person with leprosy. An unnamed woman anoints Jesus' head with an expensive oil in a container of alabaster which we are told was very costly. The oil is rich in fragrance and one can only imagine the sweet aroma that filled the room while the oil flowed downward from the head of the precious Lamb of God.

The cost of the oil was about one year's wages. How many of us could afford to give, or if we had it to offer, would we have done what this woman did out of her love and gratitude for the Savior? Much like the disciples, with emphasis on what we know of Judas, our focus, as Christians, is often on the monetary gain versus the spiritual blessing which we can by no means purchase with coins (silver nor gold). Ironically in another passage, even in Judas' indignation and proclamation that the oil could have been given and sold to help the poor, we see hypocrisy; because the scriptures also tell us that Judas would himself steal from the moneybag (John 12:4-6). This is certainly a case of "thou doth protest too much."

The disciples are rebuking the woman and completely missing the point. The Passover is two days away and Jesus will be turned over for crucifixion. The woman's actions, in Jesus' own words, were preparing Jesus for burial, who we know to be the sacrificial lamb and the propitiation for our sins. The woman demonstrates a selfless act of devotion and worship as she pours the oil on his head.

While the disciples were focused on what they piously thought was the "correct" use of the oil, with little regard for the deity of the perfect sacrifice walking among them, they neglected to understand how Jesus was symbolically being prepared for burial, the Messiah, "the Anointed One" was being prepared for His sacrificial death on the cross.

***Prayer:** Father, help me to focus on those things that bring you glory. Help me through your Holy Spirit to never lose sight of the sacrifice you gave through your Son. Through a selfless act beyond any monetary value but out of devotion to you and unmerited love for each one of us, He died so that all humanity might be free from sin, redeemed from the penalty of death, and reconciled back to you.*

The Reverend Rebecca Thompson
Christian Education Director, Outstanding Orlando District
Pastor, St. Paul A.M.E. Church Winter Garden

Day 7

A True Disciple

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to Him thirty pieces of silver. So, from that time he sought the opportunity to betray Him. Matthew 26:14-16 (NKJV)

A disciple is a learner or personal follower. What do you think it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ? As one of Jesus' original disciples, Judas Iscariot followed him, but obviously with impure motives and for selfish reasons. Judas was immoral! Traitor and embezzler are characteristics commonly associated with his name. These traits, in addition to Satan's influences (John 6: 66-71; John 13:21-27), motivated Judas to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. With a kiss, Judas delivered Jesus into the hands of enemies that Judas knew were already plotting to kill Him. What precipitated this action is a real-life example of hypocrisy: Judas became angry when he saw Mary, Lazarus's sister, anoint Jesus with expensive oils (Matthew 26:6-7; John 12:3-6).

Jesus viewed Mary's actions as preparation for his death, which according to him, would occur in about three days. Judas, however, focused on the monetary value of oil. Falsely claiming concerns for the poor, Judas denounced Mary's actions. Actually, as treasurer for Jesus and the other disciples, Judas had been stealing from the treasure for his own purposes, without regard for others. Surely, Judas is not a reputable example of Christian discipleship for which believers should aspire. Instead, his example is one to contemplate as unacceptable, particularly during this Lenten Season, as we recommit our lives to Jesus Christ.

***Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for your grace and mercy. Please search me and know my heart, dear Lord. Cleanse me of all that displeases you and make me acceptable in your sight. Help me to become more like Jesus and walk in His ways every day. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen*

**Dr. Catherine S. Powell, Associate Florida Conference CED & Writer
Pensacola-Panama City District**

Day 8

Preparing for the Celebration

¹⁷ Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples....."'" Matthew 26:17-19 (NKJV)

Have you ever prepared for or planned a celebration? A feast or dinner party? If so, then you know there are delicate details that you must consider in advance, like the location, city, time, and menu. Others may call it the who, where, when, and what.

Let us pause for a moment to imagine and envision what the disciples' may have been thinking as they inquired where Jesus wanted them to prepare the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Passover Meal, or the Last Supper as others refer to it. These Jewish holy days (holidays) were design to observe God delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt.

I would think there was joy, excitement, zeal, and anticipation with finding the location, the host/owner of the property, menu, and guest. The disciples may have been looking for retribution thinking the Messiah would take his rightful place on the physical throne.

Conversely notice, the writer does not disclose the name of the person who will be hosting the celebration. Jesus tells them to go into the city (Jerusalem) to a certain man. Did you observe the scripture...in this Last Supper? What a mighty God we serve! Notice the calmness in these verses, there is no indication of nervousness by The Teacher. He instructs them in an organized, planned, and prepared fashion. Go tell "a certain man," that "The Teacher says, my time is at hand." In other words, it is time, and we will dine at your house.

The disciples were obedient and walked by faith to prepare the meal. They followed Jesus's instructions. I can imagine them trusting, walking, and singing (In the words of CeCe Winans' "Believe for It."), "You Said it! I Believe it! It Is Done!" over and over as they prepared the magnificent feast.

Reflection: Has the Lord instructed you to prepare, and you thought the details were vague? What did you do? Were you obedient? Did you walk in faith? If not, then I challenge you today to follow your calling.

Prayer: *Father God in the Name of Jesus, we thank You for being Omnipresent and Omnipotent. We come seeking forgiveness for not going immediately when you sent us. We repent today and vow to walk in faith. We thank You for Your Son Jesus, for deliverance and restoration. Amen*

Dr. Viesta Kinsler Skipper
"Lively" Lakeland District Christian Education Director
Hurst Chapel AME Church, Winter Haven, Florida

Day 9

Painful Betrayal

*When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will **betray Me**." And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. Matthew 26:20-25*

"Betrayal is painful, especially coming from a friend or a loved one. Betrayal for many of us is the end all, unforgivable, relationship severed beyond repair. Yet, this betrayal led to a beautiful relationship between us and God.

Judas' betrayal was a fulfillment of prophecy. This horrific action/sacrifice allows for us to experience God's grace and mercy every day. In order for that to have happened, Jesus had to be delivered into the hands of the enemy, crucified, die to rise again.

Judas' betrayal shows us that even in the midst of knowing our sins, Jesus will still sit with us. He will still love us.

The greatest betrayal has been prophesied so the greatest love could come forth. That greatest love is renewed grace, mercy, and blessings from God every day."

Prayer: *God we thank You for Your grace and Your mercy. We acknowledge Your unconditional love towards us, even in the midst of our sins. We thank You for Your faithfulness towards us. Amen.*

The Reverend Carla "PK" Bouie
Founder of The Black Church Student
www.theblackchurchstudent.com

Day 10

The Gift of Self

In the sacred exchange of bread and cup during the Last Supper, Jesus reveals the essence of the Lenten Journey— the gift of self. Breaking the bread, He presents it as His body, a tangible offering of Himself. Simultaneously, He shares the cup, signifying His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. The very act of giving His body and blood encapsulates the epitome of selflessness and sacrificial love. Matthew 26:26-30

Jesus, in offering the gift of himself, establishes a transformative paradigm for us. The broken bread symbolizes vulnerability, a willingness to be divided for the sake of others. It represents the surrender of self, a breaking open of one's being to be shared and consumed for the nourishment of others. Likewise, the poured-out cup illustrates a covenant sealed in blood, a commitment that surpasses personal comfort and convenience. It embodies the profound truth that love, expressed through sacrifice, is the key to forgiveness and reconciliation.

As followers of Christ, we are invited into this beautiful exchange of self-giving. The gift of self is not only found in tangible acts of service but in the daily surrender of our wills, ambitions, and desires. It calls us to emulate Christ's sacrificial love in our relationships, careers, and communities. As we move through Lent, may the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice stir us to give more fully of ourselves. We do not have a Savior who hoarded His time, energy, or comfort. We have a Lord who poured Himself out as an offering. He calls us to follow His example by giving generously of our lives.

Where is God inviting you to increase your gift of self? Consider giving more in these ways:

- Your talents and abilities offered to help others
- Your time spent listening to and serving those in need
- Your resources shared to bless your church and community
- Your worship given to God with abandon
- Your love extended with grace and forgiveness

Let us embrace the journey of Lent by following our Lord's example of self-giving love. As we pour ourselves out, we draw closer to the One who gave everything for us.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Son, who exemplified the ultimate act of self-giving. Teach me the depth of sacrificial love, that I may, in turn, offer myself for the well-being of others. Help me to break free from self-centeredness and embrace a life marked by the gift of self. Lord, as you freely gave of yourself for me, teach me to give freely of myself each day. Show me practical ways to offer my life as a living sacrifice to you and those around me. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

The Reverend Michael Clark

11th Episcopal District Episcopal Curriculum Committee

Day 11

The Faithful Heart: Strengthened Through Trials

The words of Jesus in Matthew 26:31-33 hold significance as we journey through the Lenten season. These verses reveal not only the human weakness found in the disciples but also the divine strength that can be obtained through faith.

Jesus, knowing what was to come, spoke to His disciples about their impending desertion. He explained that despite their claims of unwavering loyalty, they would indeed stumble and fall away. This conversation took place just before Jesus's arrest and subsequent crucifixion, which would test the faith of the disciples in ways they could not have imagined.

As we reflect on this passage, we cannot help but see ourselves in the disciples' struggle. How often do we find ourselves making bold assertions of faith but faltering when faced with adversity, doubt, or fear? Yet, in these moments, we are reminded that even though we may stumble, God's grace remains unchanging, and His love endures.

The Lenten season provides us with a precious opportunity to rekindle our faith, just as Jesus restored His disciples. It is a period of self-examination, reflection, and repentance. As we draw closer to God during this time, He strengthens our hearts and deepens our trust in Him.

Trials and challenges are inevitable in our lives, but our response during these difficult times reflects the condition of our hearts. Will we stumble and fall away, or will we, like the disciples, rise in faith and surrender to the will of God? It is through these trials that our faith is tested and refined, ultimately bringing us closer to our Savior.

Let us embrace this Lenten season as an opportunity for growth. May we humbly seek God's grace, guidance, and strength as we journey through the challenges of life. And as we stumble, let us remember that even in our weakness, God's love never ceases. He sees our hearts, forgives our shortcomings, and restores us with His unfailing grace.

***Prayer:** Heavenly Father, as we continue on this Lenten journey, we come before You with hearts seeking renewal and strength. We acknowledge our human frailty and our tendency to stumble in the face of adversity. Lord, grant us the courage to surrender our will to Yours, even when we face trials. Strengthen our hearts and deepen our faith, that we may rise above our weaknesses and be guided by Your unfailing love. May this season of reflection draw us closer to You and pave the way for a renewed relationship with You. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.*

The Reverend LaMone A. Gibson
Pastor, Greater New Bethel AME Church, Live Oak

Day 12

Responding To Defining Moments in Life

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me" Matthew 26:36-38 (NKJV)

Defining moments in life are memorialized by profound influences that somehow alter the course of life because of some external condition or event. The defining moment in our devotional describes one of the final days in Jesus' earthly ministry. His ministry was irresistible, working miracles, showing compassion, and gaining favor from the multitudes. Jesus knew his mission on earth was coming painfully to an end and the priest and elders were plotting to kill him, using Judas, a chosen disciple to betray him.

After dining with his disciples for the final time, and Judas goes to do the unthinkable, Jesus and the remaining disciples make their way to Gethsemane so Jesus could pray. Jesus leaves eight disciples and takes his inner circle; Peter, James, and John, or "the Triad;" a short distance off to stand watch as he goes a bit further to pray.

Little did they know, the Triad were about to bear witness to another defining moment in Jesus' ministry. They watched as Jesus is seized by horror and grief while contemplating taking on the weight of the sin of the world. No crowds, no fanfare, no miracles, and no excitement; just the Triad.

In that moment while Jesus grieved, he grieved for the disciples, his followers, and for us. He grieved for the sake of the world. And so, I ask, what is our response to this defining moment in the life of Jesus?

Prayer: *Almighty God, we thank you for the ministry of Jesus and how he responded to defining moments in his life. Allow his example to challenge us daily to respond to his life-giving sacrifice. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

Dr. Donnell J. Moore

11th Episcopal District Curriculum Committee

Dynamic Daytona Beach Director of Christian Education

Day 13

Let This Cup Pass

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Matthew 26:39 (NKJV)

Life has a strange way of forcing us to realize that God truly does know what is best for us. When faced with challenging situations we often realize that God is our sustaining grace. During life's impossible moments, it is God who makes it possible to overcome in a manner consistent with His will and His way.

As we focus on our scripture reading today, we see Jesus providing an example of how Christians should deal with the uncertainties that are a part of our lives. First, notice the text tells us, "He went a little farther" which means He did not give up, he positioned Himself to be closer to God. Amid doubt, lack of understanding, and confusion we too must position ourselves to be closer to God, to be in the presence of The Almighty when trouble come our way. This scripture continues to teach as it states he "fell on His face and prayed".

This gives us a positive example of how to deal with the difficult times that will surely come our way. It demonstrates how our Savior dealt with a moment of doubt in His life. It also reveals that a difficult moment in the life of our Savior did not stop Him from leaning on His source of power. It further reveals who our Savior trusted for a Godly answer during His difficult situation. There is no better teacher for us than our Savior as today's scripture demonstrates who to trust in life's most challenging situations. Finally, today's text provides clarity on how to approach God in a Christian manner. Jesus provides divine guidance in these words, "if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." This is an excellent example of how Christians must receive the anointed responses we receive from our Savior. As we go before Our Savior in prayer we must be: willing to accept His will in our lives, willing to move forward in His will, and willing to live according to His will. Sometimes we may find it difficult when we reflect on embracing God's will during life's difficult, challenging, and impossible situations, however, we must focus on the fact, that whatever the issue; "the cup will pass from us".

***Prayer:** Lord, as we are in a season of focused prayer, my prayer is; if it is at all possible let the cup of worldly distractions fall from me. Help me to stay focused on Your will for my life. Help me to remember the true meaning of the sacrifice that You made for all of humanity. Continue to give me the grace to run the race that You have before me. Not my will, but Your will be done. Amen!*

The Reverend Dr. Vaseal V. Montgomery
East Conference Director of Christian Education
Pastor, Mt. Zion AMEC (Southside)

Day 14

F.A.I.T.H.F.U.L

“But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. Matthew 26:56 (NKJV)

Faithful: a commitment to aligning one's thoughts, actions, and life choices with the divine plan or purpose of God.

The walk of the elect is one that requires an attitude of perseverance and faith. Hebrews 11:1-2 reminds us that *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by this the elders obtained a good report.* Each of us was created with divine intention, by a holy God, and assigned a portion of God's will to perform in the earth. It is this assignment that we must each give an account of, for God expects us to steward the talent that was apportioned to us. As we pledge our very lives and allegiance to the will of God and enlist as a soldier in the army of the Lord, we don't often count the cost of discipleship. Jesus exemplifies this very premise as He traverses the landscape of plots, betrayals, and murderous attempts on His very life.

During moments of weakness and distress, after crying out in the Garden of Gethsemane, He realized that in order for the scriptures to be fulfilled, He must press forward and remain faithful. In order for God's divine word and plan be fulfilled, Jesus had to remember and profess *“nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”* Facing a friend who betrayed Him with a kiss, He remained faithful. As all the disciples, the ones who watched Him heal the sick, deliver from evil, feed the hungry, raise the dead, forsook Him and fled, He remained faithful.

This is a reminder to each of us, that the journey may not always be easy, but if you truly count the cost, you will realize that your faithfulness to God is always great gain! During this season of reflection and remembrance, fix your eyes on the testimony of Jesus. It is in His testimony that we will be strengthened by remembering that *ALL* things will work together for our good when we are faithful to the will and purpose of God. The journey may be filled with many dangers, toils, and snares but don't forsake God or flee- remain faithful. Your faithfulness to God is how you will obtain a good report in the annals of eternity.

The Reverend Dr. Sha'Leda A. Mirra, Ph.D., M.Div. LCSW, CAP
Pastor of Union African Methodist Episcopal Church, Lake

Day 15

“THE AGONY OF GUILT”

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. 2 And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to [a]Pontius Pilate the governor. 3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood....” Matthew 27:1-5

Have you ever done or said anything that you regret or had remorse about? You wanted to take it back but couldn't because it was already done. We all have felt that way at some time or another. It is called **Guilt!** Judas has a strong feeling of guilt as he has betrayed Jesus. The chief priests and the elders took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. They bound Him and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. When Judas saw Jesus being condemned, he felt deep regret. He felt so bad that he changed his mind and tried to give back the thirty pieces of silver, but they refused it. Judas realized he had betrayed innocent blood. He could not handle such depth of shame and guilt, so he relieved himself by throwing all the thirty pieces of silver on the ground, left and hanging himself.

We too experience this feeling of agony and pain within us when we realize that we have sinned in word or deed. We acknowledge like Judas and David; we have sinned against God and God alone. It may be so bad that we, like Adam and Eve, feel hopeless, run, hide, and get “fig leaves” to cover our nakedness. God is a God of great compassion and mercy. He is willing to forgive. We must confess our sins. In 1 John 1:9 it reads, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” It is nothing like being at ease and relieved of the agony of guilt that can haunt us if we don't confess it to God. Forgiveness is available to all of us no matter the depth of sin. Therefore, we do not have to go to the extreme as Judas to commit suicide. God loves us unconditionally. Accept His Forgiveness!

Prayer: *God of grace and mercy, forgive me of all my sins committed by thought, word, or deed. Your word promises if I would confess my sins, you would be faithful to forgive me and purify me of all unrighteousness. When guilt holds me down to my unresolved past issues, help me to remember Your promises. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

The Reverend Kennetta C. Carter
Pastor, Greater Payne AMEC
Jacksonville, FL

Day 16

Jesus' Blood Covers All Sin

6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." 7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, 10 and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me." Matthew 27:6–10 (NKJV)

When Judas Iscariot, an apostle of Jesus, tried to return the thirty pieces of silver, he betrayed Jesus for, he was met with corrupt minds, behavior, and rules from twisted religious leaders. They took money out of the temple treasury but refused to put the same money back into the treasury, they kept religious rules but were loose in true justice and real mercy and they tried to hide their evil acts by purchasing land for a public cemetery called the field of blood. Nothing will grow on that field, but in a few days, Jesus's blood would cover it. All Judas and the religious leaders had to do was to go to Jesus, confess their sins, and genuinely repent of their sins for I John 1:9 declares, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." The blood of Jesus is our lifeline, our healer, and our strength and no sin is greater than the mercy of God through Jesus.

Therefore, beloved, when we are entangled in sin, Jesus is our Savior and God's lamb who takes away the sins of the world and his blood has the power to blot out sins and cleanse us from iniquity.

***Prayer:** Lord, Jesus, in this Lenten Season, let us never forget who you are, what you have done for us, and that it is your blood of the new covenant which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Thank you for loving us unto death, healing us by your blood, and giving us the ability to live spiritually and physically, in Jesus Christ name, we pray. Amen*

**The Reverend Mandella Smith
East Conference**

Day 17

Silence in Sovereignty

"Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' Jesus said to him, 'It is as you say.' And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, 'Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?' But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly." Matthew 27:11-14 (NKJV)

In the shadow of the cross, amidst accusers and the clamor of false testimony, stood the embodiment of truth, Jesus Christ. Pilate, the Roman governor, peered into the eyes of serenity, seeking a defense, a plea, an explanation from the lips of the one called King of the Jews. Yet, in this divine moment, Jesus chose a profound silence, a response that echoed louder than the cries for condemnation. Jesus' silence before Pilate is not a submission to weakness but a testament to His sovereignty. It is a powerful display of control amidst chaos; a lesson in the strength of quietude when the world demands noise. His silence was not of resignation but of fulfillment, the unfolding of a divine narrative preordained since the dawn of creation. In His quiet response, Jesus embodies the peace that transcends human understanding, a peace offered to all who face the trials and tribulations of this world. As followers of Christ, we are often compelled to defend our faith, to speak against injustice, to be the voice in the wilderness. Yet, there is profound wisdom in discerning when to speak and when to embrace silence. For in silence, we find space for God's voice to resonate, for His will to manifest, and for His grace to be sufficient. Let us marvel, as Pilate did, at the strength of Christ's silence, for it is in our quiet surrender to God's will that we too can stand in the face of adversity, anchored in the assurance of His eternal sovereignty. May we embrace the moments of silence in our lives, allowing them to be filled with the presence of the One who spoke the universe into existence and yet chose silence on the road to our redemption.

Prayer: *"Gracious God, as we reflect on the sacred text from Matthew 27th chapter where Christ faced His accusers head-on, we are reminded of the humility and strength shown by Jesus during His trial before Pilate. Help us to embody the same courage and grace in the face of adversity. Grant us the wisdom to discern right from wrong, and the courage to stand firm in our beliefs. Give now the holy conviction to speak truth to power no matter the sacrifice or toll it takes on our social status or personal convenience. May we draw inspiration from Jesus' example and strive to live out His teachings in our daily lives."*

The Reverend George L. Reed Jr.
Pastor, Mt. Zion AME-GCS

Day 18

The Path of Least Resistance

When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." Matthew 27:19-24

Have you ever wondered why the path that is the easiest to travel is the path we often take? Is it really the easiest path? Do we choose it out of fear, the unknown, or maybe even like Pilate – because it's easy? Even the strongest and bravest among us encounter times when we don't make the right decisions. It's not always for lack of the desire to do the right thing, but lack of the strength to make the tough choices, to take a different path, or to come to a different conclusion.

As in this passage, we often get warnings, messages, and influences from every side, but something still stands in our way of taking a stand. We are concerned about our pride, reputation, prestige, and position. But I ask you, What About Jesus! What About What's Right! Pilate saw that he couldn't prevail. He knew he had all the evidence necessary to do the right thing. However, even though it was out of his character, he threw up his hands and took the path of least resistance.

During this Lenten season, let's prioritize searching for areas of our lives where we remain neutral, where our faith seems lukewarm, and where we know what is right but don't do what is right. Let's avoid the Path of Least Resistance!

***Prayer:** Lord, search my heart. For those places where I have fallen weak in my faith, help me to regain my strength. For those times when I followed the path of least resistance; forgive me. Help me to show others that your grace is sufficient – all I must do is seek your face! You are my strength. Amen.*

Sharon Rashad – First Lady of New Mt. Moriah AME Church, Jacksonville, FL.

Director of Christian Education – Alachua-Central District, Rev. Sha'Reff Rashad, Pastor

Day 19

What are you Giving Up for Lent?

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. 28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. Matthew 27:27-31 (NKJ)

At the beginning of the Lenten Season there is often a lot of conversation surrounding giving up something for Lent.

In some circles, even our ritual "Hello" and "How are you?" get adjusted to include the question, "What are you giving up for Lent?". Some ask the question without much thought, while others answer the question without much thought. Thus, the Lenten Season can take on an atmosphere where ritualism overshadows the reflection.

Then, halfway through, our determination redoubles just so that we can say that we reached our goal with only one or maybe two relapses. While some others of us will begin to wonder what these forty days will come to represent as our spiritual journey continues down through the years.

Meanwhile, halfway through our text, at verse 29, we are told that they put a crown of thorns on His head; a reed in His right hand; they bowed the knee; and they hailed Him King of the Jews. Empty gestures. All done as mockery. No adoration. No honor. No reverence. No respect.

So, if we are determined to give up something for Lent. How about we give up ritualism and empty gestures? How about we choose to be more intentional in our adoration, honor, reverence, respect and reflection towards God and the things of God?

Prayer: Dear Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. Amen

The Reverend Willie Merrick
Florida Conference Christian Education Director

Day 20

“Called to Carry the Cross of Christ”

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. Matthew 27:32 (NKJ)

When we reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross, it's viewed as a disturbing and upsetting series of events. As Jesus gets close to the end of His journey, He's unable to carry the cross any further. Then we find that He is aided by an innocent by-stander. Someone who, perhaps, was not eager to do so was being forced, and commanded to assist. This reminds me of the songs, "No Cross No Crown" and "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone".

How would you feel if you were called to help carry the Cross of Christ? Let's look at the ultimate assignment which forever changes the human race from a different perspective. If asked, would you delay your response, or would you seize the moment that demonstrates the beauty of following Jesus by carrying His cross? Would you deny yourself this opportunity to serve and to follow Jesus? Unlike the situation with Simon, the innocent by-stander, we have the freedom to choose to follow Jesus. The beauty and the blessing of this, is in being obedient to Christ as He bore the cross for our sins. Therefore, as we go through this Lenten season and prepare for Easter lets us remember the purpose of carrying the cross.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the cross You allowed us to carry. Please give us the strength, to persevere so that You may be glorified while we endure the weight of our cross. Thank You for the beauty of sharing in Your suffering and the spirit of "Simon" towards helping us to bear our cross of life. Though we may get weak and feel tired, by Your grace, we ask that You give us the courage to embrace and to carry our cross all the way to end. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**The Reverend Nikita Wiggins
Florida Conference**

Day 21

“He’s Got My Back”

“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1 (NKJ)

During this Lenten season, we should remember the trials and ultimate sacrifice Jesus made for us. As we live from day to day, there will be times of trouble and times we need somebody to lean on. That person is Jesus. When you are troubled, feeling low and wanting to give up, choose to focus on God. Choose to surrender to Jesus, keeping in mind that God is your strong tower. He is high above all things, especially when you may think it is impossible to overcome. God can and will deliver on time. When we need Jesus, he is always there whether we acknowledge him or not. Jesus knows that the devil is busy seeking whom he can devour. Christians do get weak on this spiritual journey. That’s when we need call on Jesus. You can’t make it by yourself. You need God’s strength.

Scripture reminds us to be strong and depend on God. Some of my favorite song lyrics include “We’ve come this far by Faith leaning on the Lord”, “All of my help comes from the Lord”, “Leaning on His everlasting Arms”, “The storm is passing over”, “He made a way”, “God’s Grace” and so many others. You must trust in God to see you through any obstacle you may encounter. Be still and let God fight your battles. Thank Him daily for all He does in your life.

Prayer: *Father God, thank You for another day. I would not have made it this far without Your grace and mercy. For that, I thank You. Please give me strength to face any challenge that may come my way when I am weak. I will trust You to help me in times of trouble. Continue to give me strength to do Your will as I walk this Christian journey. Keep me mindful of Your goodness. I need You Lord today, tomorrow, and forever. This I ask in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Ms. Carolyn Hill
Florida Conference

Day 22

“Conquerors Through Christ's Love”

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."
Romans 8:37 (NKJV)

As we embark on this Lenten journey in 2024, let us reflect on the profound message of Romans 8:37. In these few words, the apostle Paul encapsulates the essence of our Christian faith - that through Christ's love, we are not just conquerors, but more than conquerors.

Lent is a season of self-reflection and spiritual growth, a time to draw closer to God through prayer, fasting, and meditating on His Word. The challenges and trials we face in life can often weigh us down, making us feel overwhelmed and defeated. Yet, the message of Romans 8:37 reminds us that we are not defined by our circumstances but by our relationship with Christ.

Paul uses the phrase "in all these things" to encompass the trials, tribulations, and hardships we encounter. It's a reminder that we don't escape life's difficulties, but we conquer them through Christ's love. His love is our anchor, our source of strength, and our assurance that no matter what we face, we are more than conquerors.

During this Lenten season, let us make a conscious effort to deepen our understanding of Christ's love. Let us remember that His sacrifice on the cross was the ultimate expression of that love, a love that empowers us to overcome every obstacle in our path.

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, As we embark on this Lenten journey, we thank You for the reminder that we are more than conquerors through the love of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to fully grasp the depth of that love and to rely on it in times of trial. Give us the strength to endure, the wisdom to learn, and the faith to trust in Your plan for our lives. May this Lenten season draw us closer to You, and may we emerge from it with a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper appreciation for Your unfailing love.*

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

The Reverend Christopher Jordan
Florida Conference

Day 23

Bread of Life

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. John 6:35 (ESV)

Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday.

In fact, one could say that the deepest meaning of Lent is a time of repentance. It is a time for us to be reminded that sin separates us from God. The season of Lent is a time to reflect on Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

As I reflected on the selected text, I was reminded that Jesus is not just our "Bread of Life" for forty days per year, but He is our daily "Bread of Life".

Some years ago, one of my former pastors preached a sermon on Lent and his subject was "You have the forty but what about the other three hundred twenty- five?"

This has been a question for me ever since I heard this sermon. How am I living my life each day? Am I being that light for others to see Jesus in me? Am I being that salt of the earth as Jesus said we should be? My answer to these two questions is a resounding no.

I say this because there are times in our lives when we need to see the light from someone else to assist us in getting through the dark times in our lives.

We should not be ashamed to admit to ourselves and to others (at times) that we are not super Christians.

As we all know, our nation and our world have gone through the devastating virus called COVID 19, and we are still experiencing different variants of this virus.

Our nation is in political turmoil. BUT! We must remember we always have Jesus, our 'Bread of Life' to see us through all situations every day of our lives no matter how we may be feeling on the inside or what outside issues may be affecting our lives and our families.

Remember, Jesus is our "**BREAD OF LIFE**" and Scripture lets us know that when we come to Him, we shall never hunger for the things of this world nor shall we thirst, because we can always go to Him at any time day or night

Prayer:** Jesus, we thank You for being our Bread of Life and our Living Water. We thank You that Your arms are always open, and we can come to You just as we are without any form or fashion, and You will in no wise turn us away. **AMEN.

Reverend Carrie L. Brown
Pensacola Panama City District

Day 24

Peace

Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. John 14:27 (ESV)

Peace as defined in Webster's Dictionary means freedom from disturbance, tranquility.

Upon reviewing this passage of Scripture, we find Jesus giving words of comfort to His Disciples prior to His crucifixion. Jesus promises that He will leave them with peace. The amazing emphasis is that they have not fully realized or understood why this particular teaching would become a core principle to their very survival.

As we reflect on the myriad of military disturbances in our world today, peace appears to be a foreign concept. Our society has become a proverbial slug fest, with family members, legislators, and neighbors vying for greater importance. In our own might, there are few controls we can administer.

However, we can find solace in the Word of God which reminds us that, "we are in the world, but not of the world." As we maneuver through the trials and consequences of our sinful world, let us remember the words Jesus gave his disciples in this verse of Scripture and let us accept the true peace that only comes from our Savior.

***Prayer:** Eternal Lord our God, we thank You for Your love and reminding us through Your Holy Word that true peace comes from You. We thank You God for being our Sovereign Lord and please continue to encourage us when we become discomfited by our surroundings. It is in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.*

The Reverend Bettye Weaver
Florida Conference

Day 25

Uniquely Made

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)

The last year before the COVID-19 Pandemic, we had an adult crafts class as a part of Vacation Bible School. One night, our project was to create mugs. This process consisted of drawing on the mugs and attaching stickers, and then baking the mugs in the oven on a low temperature, so that the artwork would set in. I was so excited about my mug! I took my time, and I was happy with the way it turned out, and then my good friend, Michelle burst my bubble and told me, "Lynnette, I love you, but stick to preaching! Artwork is not your thing!" She was right. The fish I tried to draw looked like an unidentifiable blob and half of my stickers were hanging off the side. I pretended that she hurt my feelings, but in the end, I couldn't help but laugh! Before the other students came to pick up their mugs, I took some time to inspect each one. I marveled at the way each one held such a unique design. No mug looked the same! Although the mugs are all designed to do the same thing on the inside, the outside had its own distinct look. This moment reminded me that just like those mugs, none of us are the same. We are all uniquely designed and crafted by God. We are all *jars of clay*: created to hold God's treasure and to share that treasure with the world. And although we are all designed to hold that same treasure on the inside, God created us all differently on the outside. We've all been created with our own gifts and our own graces to use for one common goal; to bring honor and glory to God! To proclaim to a dying and a lost world that the *surpassing power belongs to God and not to us!* You are God's unique creation-there has never and will never be another exactly like you. During this time of Lent, pray and ask God to show you how you can use your own unique gifts and talents to spread God's love.

Prayer: *Holy God, thank you for your grace, your mercy, your love, and your power. Thank you for creating each one of us in a unique way. Thank you for filling us as jars of clay with your power and your love. Empower us on our Lenten journey to be a beacon of light in a dark world that needs to experience your love. Amen.*

The Reverend Lynnette R. Daughtry
Pastor-Payne Chapel AME Church, Sarasota
West Coast Conference Christian Education Director

Day 26

True Faith

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. 1 Peter 1:8 (ESV)

Only a few believers had the privilege of walking, talking and witnessing the wondrous works of Jesus the Christ while he was on earth.

Peter had seen Jesus and had been personally trained by Him. Peter knew and loved Joshua as a man, and as the Only Begotten Son of Yahweh, based on three years of personal ministry, face-to-face experience. Peter knew persecution firsthand, and nothing could shake his confidence in his risen Savior.

And the trials and tribulations of today's bellicose and hateful world speak loudly to the The Trial of Faith before humanity. My mother Ruby Mae Gallmon insisted that two notable products of faithful, "God-fearing" people were: **love and joy**— and this kind of joy is so great as to be beyond description. For followers of Christ, our senses correlate with things sensible and present—reason is a higher guide. Yet, faith ascends further still. It is the evidence of things not seen. (**Hebrews 11:1**)

Now, in our age of Advanced Photoshop and Artificial Intelligence (AI), seeing certainly is no longer believing. But true faith is never alone and produces a strong love in and to Jesus Christ. True Christians have a sincere love for Mary's Baby, because they believe in HIM without seeing him in the flesh. And this faith brings unspeakable joy, and full of glory in our The Messiah. (**Isaiah 41:10**)

For most, it cannot be described by words and is best discovered, via personal engagement— "Oh taste and see" the full of glory of the Good Shepherd.

Believing when we have not seen; now that is "**Saving Faith**"— meaning that though you did NOT see Our LORD die on the cross for your sins, you Believe it. What the world needs now are those who join us in believing that He arose from the dead, early on Sunday Morning with ALL Power in HIS Hand!

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." **John 20:29**

Peace,
The Reverend Kenneth Irby
Bethel AME Church, St. Petersburg

Day 27

Cast Your Care on the Lord

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

There’s a line from a popular Tyler Perry movie in which a man is professing his love to the woman he wants to marry, “All you have to do is wake up and I got you from there.” God is so much better than that. He wakes up. We have the priceless gift casting all our cares upon him, for He cares for us. He loves and cares for us no matter how many times we falter. During the Lenten Season we sacrifice something. God sacrificed his Son Jesus Christ for us. What will we sacrifice for Him? It may be food, an activity or sometimes people. It’s the perfect time to re-evaluate, reclaim and reset. If we are honest with ourselves, it’s likely something we shouldn’t be doing to the degree we are doing it. Or it’s something we shouldn’t be doing at all. That is if we are honest regarding some of our choices. Time to re-evaluate its importance to your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Reevaluate and cast this journey to the one that was sacrificed for us, Jesus Christ. God is there each step as you reclaim your power to say no. Say no and allow the healing to begin. Cast all your cares to the Lord and get that spiritual reset.

***Prayer:** Heavenly Father, most merciful Lord and Savior. Thank you for Your grace and mercy. Thank You for allowing us this Lenten Season to re-evaluate what’s important in our lives. And to reclaim our power to say no to the forces which seek to destroy and kill. Time to reset who we are in accordance with Your word and what our work forward should be. Lord God, bless us with the strength, wisdom, patience, kindness, and love to fulfill your plan for us. Amen*

Sister Valarie Russ

Christian Education Director-Payne Chapel AME Church-Sarasota, FL

West Coast Conference WMS President

Day 28

Transactional/Conditional Promises

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

We find that there are biblical promises made by God that are the foundation of our faith in Him. They can be identified as the unconditional works of the Almighty. The fulfillment of these unconditional promises depends solely on God’s power and His might, and they happen because He is God! I refer to them as “zero conditional promises” because, no matter the action, the outcome is always and forever the same; today, yesterday, and forevermore (Heb. 13:8).

However, there are also biblical conditional promises that we play a major role in determining the actions of God. The fulfillment and reality of these conditional promises require that certain requirements are met in advance. I refer to these as “transactional conditional promises” because the outcome is always based on the choices that we make.

God gives us a “transactional/conditional promise” in that He made provision for our sins to be forgiven and for us to be cleansed from all unrighteousness when He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the Cross for the payment of our sin. God has established an open-ended transaction to redeem us and set us free from the bondage of sin that entangles us. Christ “suffered for sins once for all time, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

If we will...then He will... Our forgiveness and cleansing are based on our willingness to confess all of our sins to Him.

Prayer: *“Heavenly Father, you alone are faithful and just, steadfast and reliable, unwavering in Your promises forevermore. We confess our sins before You during this season of Lent, as You remind us of Your promise of our forgiveness and cleansing, made available to us through Jesus’ blood shed on Calvary. ‘We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we...have committed, by thought, word, and deed...We do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry’. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

The Reverend Dr. Etta Owens
Pastor-Mt Olive AME Church, Plant City
West Coast Conference

Day 29

A Humble King

"The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!' When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?'" Matthew 21:6-9 (NIV)

Reflection: As we journey through Lent, we encounter the pivotal moment of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The scene is rich with symbolism and significance. Jesus, the King of kings, enters not on a magnificent steed, but on a humble donkey. His disciples obediently fulfill his instructions, and the people spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road, acknowledging him as their long-awaited Messiah.

In this passage, we witness a profound contrast between the world's idea of power and authority and the Kingdom of God. Jesus, the Son of God, demonstrates humility and meekness, traits that characterize his entire earthly ministry. He doesn't seek earthly glory or dominion; instead, he comes to serve and to save.

As we reflect on Jesus' humble entry into Jerusalem, we're reminded of the humility required of us as his followers. Lent provides us with an opportunity to examine our hearts and align them with the values of God's Kingdom. Like Jesus, we're called to humble ourselves, to serve others, and to prioritize the will of God above our own desires.

Action: Today, consider an act of humility and service you can perform for someone in need. It could be as simple as offering a kind word, lending a helping hand, or spending time in prayer for others.

May this devotion inspire you as you reflect on the humility and kingship of Jesus Christ during this Lenten season.

Prayer: *Gracious God, as we journey through Lent, help us to follow the example of your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us the humility to serve others and the courage to follow your will, even when it leads us down paths of hardship and sacrifice. Open our hearts to receive the message of salvation proclaimed by Jesus, our humble King. Amen.*

The Reverend Byron B. Pressley Sr.
Pastor-Turner Chapel AME Church, Palmetto, FL
West Coast Conference

Day 30

God Cares for You

But without faith it is impossible to [walk with God and] please Him, for whoever comes [near] to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He rewards those who [earnestly and diligently] seek Him. Hebrews 11:6 (AMP)

In Amos 3:3 KJV, the question is posed, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" So, to please God is to walk with God, and to walk with God is to believe the truth of God – God is real, and moreover, God cares for us.

Circumstances can convince us that the suffering and trials we encounter are due to a vengeful or unconcerned God. In ancient times, animals and people were sacrificed to appease the gods. However, Almighty God wants our hearts, our bodies as living sacrifices and has demonstrated his love and care for us in Christ Jesus. Emmanuel came to live among us and die for us to reconcile us to right relationship. There is no greater care – no greater love.

As believers, we experience life sublime, not free from suffering but free from fear and the penalty of sin. We anticipate when "the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest," while remembering we are not forsaken. Our reward in life and life eternal is assured in our attachment to God by our belief. And our earnest belief in God drives us to seek more of the one who rewards.

***Prayer:** Father God, thank you for the measure of faith bestowed to each of us. You desire for us to know you, and to walk with you. You desire our love. So, you love us. You desire our devotion. So, you sacrificed for us. You desire our fellowship. So, you incline your ear to us. Thank you for demonstrating your expectations and helping us to walk worthy of your rewards. Amen*

The Reverend Shalonda L. Sokson
Christian Education Director-Victory AME Church, Tampa FL
West Coast Conference

Day 31

Giving Jesus Your All

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint^[a] of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:1-11 (NIV)

This twelfth chapter of the gospel of John gives us a true demonstration of sacrifice, love and devotion. The passover is near and we witness Mary pouring a pint of expensive perfume, which was valued at an entire year of income, onto the feet of Jesus. Mary sacrificed all that she had to anoint Jesus' feet. The bible records that the entire house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Mary changed the entire atmosphere in the house with her love and devotion to Jesus. She sets an example for all of us to follow.

What have you sacrificed to demonstrate your love and devotion to Jesus Christ? Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins, surely our life should reflect your devotion and love to Jesus. Mary was not deterred by the opposition of Judas and the others who felt her sacrificial offering was not necessary, and neither should you. In fact, the very act by Mary filled the entire room. Your sacrifice and love for Jesus should release a fragrance of worship and adoration for Him that catches the attention of others. Give Jesus your all, He gave His all for you.

Prayer: *We thank You, Jesus, for giving us Your all. We commit all that we have to you as a demonstration of our love and devotion to You. Help us to keep our eyes on You and not be distracted by those who seek to distract us from doing that which is good. Amen.*

The Reverend Dr. Paula Lake

11th Episcopal District Christian Education Director

Allen Chapel AMEC, Daytona Beach

Day 32

Love One Another, As I Have Loved You

³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35 (NRSV)

As Christians, we should strive to live accordingly to the will of God. Jesus intends for us to serve one another, and love everybody according to his will. As Christians we also fail to live accordingly to the will of God at times.

Jesus displayed His love for us by being crucified on the cross, therefore we are to love those around us with the same sacrificial love. We serve a God that gave up his life, not because we deserved it, but because we needed it. In today’s world unfortunately we would rather give people what we think they deserve. If we call ourselves Christians, then others should be able to see and witness the Jesus in us by us showing our love towards others. Sometimes this can be a hard task to do, despite some of our own brokenness at times, Jesus still loves us all. The Bible instructs us all, to love one another!

Prayer: Lord, teach us all how to follow the example you gave us, and that was to love as you loved. In a world filled with so much hatred reminds us that you gave up your life, not because we deserved it, but because we needed it. Please show us how to love, serve, and live according to the commandments that you have given us in your Words in the Bible. In Jesus name I pray, Amen!

Sister Raven M. Gainous
11th Episcopal District RAYAC President

Day 33

"The Comforter and Guide"

As we celebrate the sacred season of Lent, let us reflect on the words of Jesus spoken to His disciples in John 14:16-17 (NKJV): "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

Reflect on the promise Jesus made to His disciples. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, was sent to be our constant companion and guide. In our journey of fasting, let us seek His presence, knowing that He will sustain us and provide the strength we need.

Contemplate the role of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. During this time of prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of your life that need repentance and transformation. Embrace the truth that sets you free and draws you closer to God.

In the midst of our fasting and praying, let us not forget the joy of giving. Just as God generously gives to us, let us extend our hands to those in need. Seek opportunities to give selflessly, remembering that our acts of kindness and compassion reflect the love of Christ.

Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you into a deeper intimacy with the Father, experiencing His love and grace in profound ways.

Prayer: *Father may this Lenten season serve as a source of inspiration and spiritual guidance for us. May it remind us to embrace the joy of fasting, praying, and giving, and draw closer to you God through the power of the Holy Spirit. May we experience Your presence and transformation in our lives during this sacred season. We asked for all of this, in the name of your son, our Lord and Savior Jesus to Christ. Amen.*

Reverend George Hardy
11th Episcopal District Sons of Allen President

Day 34

LOST OF A LOVED ONE ---JESUS PROMISE

I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. 19. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. John14: 18-19

As a child are you experiencing sadness, loneliness, anger, helplessness, because of the loss of a mother or father through a terminal illness as they lay in their hospital bed? Jesus's disciples experienced the same thing when they learned they were losing, their earthly Father, Jesus Christ. They may have thought internally or verbally, "What will we do without you?" "Don't leave us now, we need you", "We love you so much", "Who will take care of us, teach us, guide us?" You, too, in your loss may be feeling these same emotions. Jesus Christ has a message for you, just as he had one for his disciples. In John 14:18, Jesus tells his disciples "*I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.*" Even though, in flesh, I am leaving you, you will not be alone. My Spirit, Holy Spirit will remain with you. John 14:19 "... the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. I have given you all the guidance, love, understanding, and support to continue with my mission work. Jesus is saying the same thing to you my child in Christ, although you are losing you mother or father, you will not be alone.

We, as Christians, must always remember that God has always seen this hurt, loneliness, sadness, when we experience the loss of a mother or father, but gave to us thousands of years ago through Jesus Christ, his Spirit, His Holy Spirit that resides in us daily. So, rest assure that your weeping may endure for a night, but God's love, compassion, and understanding will be with you always through his Spirit. He will turn your weeping and sorrow into joy! Just Believe my child, Just Believe!

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, keep our grieving hearts from loss of a father or mother close to you, Oh God, remind us, Oh Lord, as you reminded your disciples years ago that you will not leave us as orphans, but with reside in us daily, through your Holy Spirit, to comfort and protect us as we live in the life you have given us. Amen*

Sister Novella Jones
11th Episcopal District CDMC Commissioner

Day 35

He Knows our Name

The LORD has called Me from the womb: The Messiah, later revealed as Jesus Christ, was called from the womb. That demonstrated the special relationship the Messiah had to God the Father. In Micah 5:2, Jesus was called even before He was in Mary's womb, yet here He starts at the point which any man or woman could relate to. Hearing our name makes an impression on us one way or another. There is a big difference when your mother calls your name than when God calls your name. Our name gives us a sense of who we are and how others communicate with us. Isaiah 49:1-7

What is even more exciting is that this relationship extends through Jesus to us. *Because of Christ, we who trust in His completed work on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins have been adopted into the family of God Romans (8:15) When we trust Christ as our Savior and Lord, He calls us by name (John 10:3).*

What a blessing to be call by God! And what a comfort to those of us who place our faith in Christ! God loves us more than we can imagine. God said, *He would never leave us nor forsake us (John 10:27-39)*

Prayer – *Dear Heavenly Father, I am so happy and blessed that you know my name. Thank You for Your perfect plan of redemption and that by grace, You formed the Lord Jesus from the womb to be Israel's suffering Servant and eternal King. Thank You that You chose me to be part of the Body of Christ, so that in Him I might show forth the praises of Him Who has called me out of darkness into His marvelous light. Praise His Holy and Righteous name, AMEN.*

The Reverend Dr. Rhella P. Murdaugh
Central Conference Women in Ministry Coordinator

Day 36

Walking in Victory

4 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.

5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. 6 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. 7 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; 8 he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. 9 It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. Isaiah 50:4-9 (NRSV)

We can have victory over sin and our enemies. Walking in Victory is a process which requires time, energy, and effort. I agree with Former University of Alabama football coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, said, “If you believe in yourself and have dedication and pride – and never quit, you’ll be a winner. The price of victory is high but so are the rewards.

Leadership requires courage and commitment. To be an effective leader we must overcome whatever keeps us from representing Christ and from moving forward. Isaiah shares insight that leads us to victory in life and ministry are:

1. Wisdom to speak into the lives of others
2. The ability to hear and understand others
3. Humility amid adversity
4. Knowing that our help comes from God
5. The toughness to endure the process
6. Unity
7. Being aware of your enemies

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on me. Lord, give me the wisdom, strength, and courage to live for you and to overcome whatever obstacles I will face. Thank you, Lord, for past, present and future victories. In Jesus Name, I pray. Amen.

The Reverend Dr. Roy Jones, Jr.
Central Conference Christian Education Director
Senior Pastor, St. James AME Church
Titusville, FL

Day 37

The Suffering Savior

³ He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes^[1] we are healed. Isaiah 53:3-5 (NKJV)

We have a Savior who suffered for us. None of us like pain. None of us like to be hurt and none of us volunteer to endure agony. We do whatever we must do but if we had a choice very few if any would say I will suffer for you because I love you. However, that's exactly what Jesus did. He is our Savior. He came to deliver us from the powers of darkness.

Jesus endure agony on the cross for us. He faced adversity and torture to set us free from our sins and to heal us from the sicknesses caused by sin. Not many will volunteer for or embrace the grief and sorrow that Jesus endured. However, because Jesus is our Savior, He was willing to endure the rigorous and barbarous treatment that any person would do their best to avoid. However, Jesus is our Savior. He came to redeem us.

Instead of being adored He was despised. Instead of being received He was rejected. He carried our burdens. He endured what we could not endure. He was crushed so that we would be comforted. He was wounded so that we would be made whole. He was bruised so that we could be better. Jesus was the suffering, Savior. Because of Him we have hope. Because of Him we are overcomers. Because of Him we are forgiven. He is our Savior. He is our liberator. Oppression and death have no power over us.

***Prayer:** Our Father and our God, thank you for being our suffering, Savior. Lord, forgive us for our disobedience and ungratefulness. Lord, help us to be strong and give us a fresh start. Lord, because of your grace and mercy we declare victory over anger, bitterness, confusion, doubt, envy, and fear. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.*

The Reverend Dr. Roy Jones, Jr.
Central Conference Christian Education Director
Senior Pastor, St. James AME Church
Titusville, FL

Day 38

A Lenten Reflection on Forgiveness

"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots." Luke 23:34 (NKJV)

As we enter the Lenten season, a time of reflection, repentance, and preparation for Easter, we turn our hearts to the profound words spoken by Jesus on the cross. In Luke 23:34, amidst unimaginable suffering, Jesus extends forgiveness to those who have crucified Him. This act of mercy holds profound significance for every Christian believer, inviting us to contemplate the depths of Christ's love and the transformative power of forgiveness.

In understanding the cultural context of this passage, it's essential to recognize the political and religious dynamics of first-century Judea. Crucifixion was a common form of execution reserved for the most heinous criminals and political insurgents. Jesus, innocent and blameless, endured this brutal fate at the hands of both Roman authorities and Jewish leaders. Despite the injustice and cruelty inflicted upon Him, Jesus responds with a prayer of forgiveness, reflecting His divine nature and unparalleled compassion.

During Lent, we are called to engage in acts of self-examination, repentance, and reconciliation. Jesus' prayer for forgiveness challenges us to reflect on our own capacity to forgive others, even in the face of betrayal, injustice, and suffering. As we meditate on Luke 23:34, we are invited to emulate Christ's example of radical forgiveness, extending grace to those who have wronged us and seeking reconciliation with God and one another.

***Prayer:** Let us take a moment to reflect on the profound significance of Jesus' words from the cross. May we, like Him, embody a spirit of forgiveness and extend grace to those who have hurt us. As we journey through Lent, may we draw closer to the heart of God, experiencing the transformative power of His mercy and love. Amen.*

The Reverend Dr. Marcus Green
Senior Pastor, Mt. Olive AME Church
Orlando, FL

Day 39

“Another Day in Paradise”

⁴³ And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Luke 24: 43

She is dressed in all white: church hat, dress below her knees, cotton stockings and nurse’s shoes. The old mother sang prayerfully, “Remember Me”, a song of hope, as we served the Holy Sacrament during the beginning of another month.

These are the same words that resonated from a criminal enduring an execution on a cross. Jesus, while suffering the same execution, hearing those words, pauses the action of dying, and gives hope to the criminal whose apparent destination was hell. The Savior hearing the plea from the dying thief, boldly proclaims these words, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

Immediately, the darkened sky, the whaling women, the scarlet blood trenched garments transform what was merely the place of execution, to the prelude for a brand-new life.

Paradise now is formed as a place where those who deserve to be on the cross can cry, “Remember me.” Jesus answers both the criminals and the sinners. He answers all those who have been bold enough to ask the Lord to “Remember me”. The miracle is that even though the criminal is not specified, Jesus does not remember the sin, but he remembers the sinner. Jesus does not discern the crier but hears and answers our cry for mercy.

***Prayer:** Oh God, we praise and thank you for your salvific work. We thank you for your redeeming work. God, we understand that you allow us to be in your presence with our mistakes, our sins, and our setbacks. You still remember us. Even when we may have forgotten you. We praise you God, as paradise is not simply a place for the perfect. We praise you that paradise is prepared for the redeemed. We sing our songs of praise. “I am redeemed.” “Let the Redeemed of the Lord say so.”*

Power and Blessings

Reverend Gerard Moss
Pastor, St. Paul AME
Apopka, FL

Day 40

The Lord will Take Care of You!

When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. John 19:26-27 (NKJV)

Isn't it interesting that Jesus addresses his mother as "Woman" and refers to his beloved disciple as her son? The powerful messages intricately woven through this discourse go beyond Mary's place as earthly mother to her embodiment of Woman who loves the Lord. Likewise, John's role transcends discipleship to her son (person) who also loves the Lord. Jesus paused amidst his own struggles and ultimate death on the cross to make sure they are both taken care of. Through this extraordinary display of love and providence, we can be assured that our Lord will take care of us whom he loves.

As this Lenten season leads us into fasting, praying, reflecting, and moving toward a closer relationship with Jesus, we can take a pause from whatever challenges that are weighing upon us and be mindful to look out for the needs of others. By this, we can behold and appreciate the people whom God has placed into our lives to help us along our journey, our spiritual family who Jesus himself united when he said: "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12:50 NKJV). Through these, the Lord is demonstrating his love and promise that he would never leave us or forsake us.

***Prayer:** Almighty God, Lord, transform us to genuinely care for each other even when we ourselves are carrying our cross and the burdens of others. By sacrificing of your son, our savior Jesus Christ, you exemplified love; so, we pray that we may extend your gracious love and providence to others whom you have stationed in our lives, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Reverend Dr. Caroline Shine
1st Vice President, 11th Episcopal District Women in Ministry
Pastor, Greater Faith AME Church, Deltona

Day 41

You Are Not Abandoned

*“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mark 15:34
NKJV*

Life is full of ups and downs. Have you ever felt abandoned by God Almighty? If the truth be told, there are times in our life that we feel forsaken. Webster defines forsaken as “abandoned or deserted.” It conveys the sense of deserting someone in a set of circumstances that are against them. We may feel forsaken by an unfaithful spouse. We may feel forsaken by family. Forsaken by so-called friends. Sometimes forsaken in our church. Tragedies have a way of leaving us feeling forsaken, too! If we feel forsaken by God, our feelings are never mimicking reality. God is forever by our side to comfort, guide, and instruct us. When others walk out, He stands nearby.

When you face trials and suffering, when you feel like God has abandoned you, remember the price that Jesus Christ paid for you. Whatever you may be going through, no matter how alone you feel, you are not abandoned. Jesus Christ is with you, and He wants to wrap His arms around you and offer you comfort and peace. Let Him turn your suffering to rejoicing!

***Prayer:** Father God, Our Eternal Father, I come right now in the matchless name of Jesus the Christ. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for enduring the feeling of abandonment by your Father for the sins of the world. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for what you suffered. Thank you for being forsaken by God Almighty so that I might never experience what that’s like. I know that you will never leave me nor forsake me! I ask these and all other blessings by faith and in belief of You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.*

**The Reverend Regina L. Womack
Central Conference**

Day 42

I Will Take Something to Drink Now

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!"
John 19:28 (NKJV)

While watching sports, you'll notice that there are some players who won't drink anything during a timeout. They usually wait until they have scored, or their assignment has been fulfilled. The reason why is because they are focused on the task at hand, and they don't want to be distracted until the assignment is complete. Have you ever been so focused on something that you didn't eat or drink anything until you were finished.

That is what happened to Jesus as he hung on that cross for six hours. It had come to the final hour. His work on the cross was coming to an end. When Jesus said, "I THIRST!" from the cross He was referring to a prophecy in Psalm 22:15: ***"My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death."*** Jesus suffered bitter pain and darkness while covered in our guilt, sin, and shame. When the act of purchasing our redemption was complete, nothing more was needed; He said, I will take something to drink now.

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, during this Lenten season I ask that you give me the wisdom, the knowledge, and the strength to stay focused on the assignment that has been placed on my life. As I pour of myself sacrificially, please fill me up.*

In Jesus's Name, Amen.

The Reverend Octavius L. Smith
St. Paul AME Church, Ocala, FL

Day 43

It is Finished!

When Jesus therefore had received the Vinegar. He said, It is Finished and He bowed His head and gave up the Ghost. John 19:30 (NKJV)

One of the last saying of Jesus on the cross. It is Finished! This phrase consists of only one Hebrew word (Tetelestai) Papyri which mean PAID IN FULL. Yes, Jesus had truly completed the work the Father had send Him to do (John 27 verse 4). The Redemptive work of the Eternal God. It was now perfected in the death of His Son Jesus Christ. The Greek word (Paradigm) which indicates that when Jesus died, He surrendered His Spirit back to God. When Jesus said this word, He was declaring the debt owed to His Father was wiped away completely and forever. Yes! He eliminated the debt owed by mankind, the debt of Sin. To reconcile us back to God (2 Corinthians 5 verses 18 to 19).

During this time, we know according to the Scriptures the Romans scourged Him by beating and crucified Him, but the wounds did not cause His death. He laid it down for the whole world. What the love and sacrifice of our Savior. He gave His life in exchange for the penalty of our sins. PAID IN FULL. We are Redeem by the blood of Jesus. He paid the ultimate sacrifice for you and me. The Apostle Paul quote in (2 Corinthians verse 21) for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him.

It is Finished! Indicates that Jesus has consumed the cup of God's wrath, through His sacrifice, the bridge between God and sinful man had been established back into covenant relationship. The work of Jesus is to seek and save that which is lost (Luke 19 verse 10) and to provide an Atonement for sinners. No one but the lord God could accomplish and say with the authority, it is Finished! Jesus Finished work on the cross was the beginning of a New Life for all who were once dead in Trespasses and sin but who are now made Alive with Christ. (Ephesians 2 verse1).

Prayer: Thank you, LORD, for your love and sacrifice you made on the Cross. I Repent LORD for my sins daily and ask for Your Forgiveness during the Lenten season that the blood of Christ wash me and make me whole to appreciate your suffering and for taking my place. In Jesus name Amen.

**Sister Inger Smith -
Bahamas Conference**

Day 44

The Death of Jesus - Total Commitment to God

*Jesus called out with a loud voice "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."
Luke 23:46*

When He said this, He breathed His last breath. Sisters and brothers, Jesus was a man who committed no sin, yet they crucified in Him. In the book of Luke, we see where king Herod had heard and saw Jesus performing many miracles, additionally, he saw the multitude were following Jesus therefore, he became jealous of the attention that the King of kings and Lord of all lords received, no doubt they began worshiping Jesus, finally king Herod had Him crucified. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit", these were His last words His final words to His Father. His works on earth was done, Jesus had finished His course. He was committed to fulfilling the will of His Father. We must always remember the life of Jesus, Mary's baby, our Lord. There was none so humble, peaceful but yet they mocked and killed him. There is no greater example of love for us than a father, our God who gave up his only son for our sins. Man would conveniently use and abuse us, for His name's sake. Therefore, people of God, I entreat with you, when you feel as if you are at the end of the road, when there seems to be no way out, you are encouraged especially during this Lenten season, to fully commit your life to Jesus. 2 Timothy Chapter 4:7-8, says "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Therefore, people of God, please remember Calvary, they will try to kill us, they will call us anything, but a child of God, simply because we are totally committed to God's will. When we would have gone the last mile of the way, and have reached the close of our day, when we would have done the best, we can, and men will not understand us, give it to God. Yes Jesus, I give you my life, I say consecrate me so I can be fully committed to you. Finally, I say "**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.**"

***Prayer:** Most gracious and everlasting Father, I humbly come before your Holy and precious Throne, I come giving You thanks, giving You all the praise, for sending your son Jesus Christ to die on Calvary's cross for my sins and for the sins of the world. I ask for your cleansing so that you will hear from me. God I commit my ways to you. Father you are omnipotent all knowing, and seeing God, I thank you for life. I thank you for being my comforter in sad times, I thank you for being my provider, I acknowledge you as Lord and Savior, the giver of life. Please continue to bless families everywhere, especially my AME family. God am asking you to bless the Youths of our Nations and continue to protect them in their studies. Keep them from harm and danger. Continue to provide for their parents and guardians. Dear God continue to bless our Church leaders, our Pastors, our Elders, the departments leaders, shower them with wisdom from above. In your Son's name I ask these favors, Amen!*

Sister Lilis N. Zonicle
Cousin McPhee AME Church Bahamas Conference

Day 45

“Receiving The Strength Of God In The Midst Of Our Test And Trials.”

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)

O what an assurance for us as children of God when we put our faith and trust in Him. This portion of scripture encourages us that whatever we may face, whatever we are going through, if we turn it over to God, He will fix it and come through for us. His word is true and sure, we put our trust in things and people who can't help us and leave God out of the picture. As the scripture admonishes us to wait on the Lord and He will renew our strength, it is so true and sure. The problem with us is that we don't like to wait, we want everything instant. I want to encourage us today, that when we go to God in prayer, that He hears and answers us in His time, which is the best and right time. Our God is an on-time God, He knows what we are in need of even before we ask. I encourage us, that when we make our request known unto God, while we are waiting for the answer, don't just sit down on your “DO NOTHING SEAT”, get up and worship and thank Him in advance for the answered prayers.

All of our help, strength, and everything else that we need comes from God. So why don't we give Him the chance in our lives, we will never be the same. We will stop living defeated lives, we will stop holding on to the doorknob trying to keep the door closed, when we ask God to open it. Let us learn to let go and let God be Lord of our lives. His words tell us, that no good thing, He would withhold from His children. He promises us, that He will renew our strength, whether it is in our physical bodies, our prayer lives, no matter what it is, all we must do is call upon Him, and TRUST HIM.

My family in Christ, I encourage us all who don't have that personal relationship with God, to now get back into the ark of safety which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. We see so much chaos, death, and destruction all around us, God is still keeping us in the midst of it all. He is giving us the grace and strength to mount up like eagles, as we soar up in His presence, God is our refuge and strength a very present help in the times of trouble. He is ALL we need. WHY WONT WE SERVE A GOD LIKE THIS? Please give Him a try, you will not regret it.

PRAYER: *Most gracious and everlasting Father, as we your children come before Your presence, we come with hearts full of praise and thanksgiving. We ask You to please forgive us of our sins so that You will hear and answer our prayers. We ask for strength and courage to run this race set before us. Your word tells us to wait on you, and you will renew our strength, so we wait patiently on you. Please continue to keep us in Your will, we surrender everything to You this day. Thank You for being our Father, let Your will be done in our lives, we ask these blessings and favors, in the precious name of Your Son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

The Reverend Winifred Gibson Williams
Bahamas Conference Christian Education Director

Day 46

Women on a Divine Assignment, with a Divine Message, and Divine Commands!

5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." 8 So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me." Matthew 28:1-10 NRSV

It was while, on a divine assignment to visit the burial site of Jesus that both Mary Magdalene and Mary received the unbelievable, shocking, and astounding, yet joyful news of His miraculous resurrection from the dead! The women were given specific divine commands twice, not only by an angelic heavenly being, but the Lord Jesus Himself!

The women were instructed not to be afraid about being called and commissioned by God for such a divine assignment but to obediently go quickly, excitedly, and joyfully share with His disciples, as well as other brothers and sisters of the church this **GLOBAL BREAKING NEWS THAT "JESUS WAS ALIVE AND RISEN FROM THE DEAD AND WOULD MEET THEM IN GALILEE!"**

What an amazing God to have entrusted Mary Magdalene and Mary with such a divine assignment, divine message, and divine commands.

***Prayer:** Heavenly Father art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, we praise and give thanks for The African Methodist Episcopal Church where the work is all divine. We praise and give thanks for the many sacred opportunities, diverse roles, and responsibilities WOMEN can function and serve in our A.M.E. Zion through our local churches, conferences, episcopal district, general board, and connectional levels. In Jesus' name, amen.*

The Reverend Thelma Williamson
Bahamas Conference Bible Discovery Hour Superintendent