



NORTH SHORE Fellowship

Lenten Guide 2020

Galatians 5:22–24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;
against such things there is no law.

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have
crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

FULL READING LIST

Please join us in reading some passages that will help us ponder the fruit of the Spirit during this Lenten season. There are personal reflections for each shaded passage.

Wednesday, February 26, 2020	Galatians 5:16–26
Friday, February 28, 2020	1 Corinthians 13:1–13
Sunday, March 1, 2020	John 15:7–13
Monday, March 2, 2020	1 John 4:7–21
Wednesday, March 4, 2020	Psalms 136:1–26
Friday, March 6, 2020	Deuteronomy 6:4–5
Sunday, March 8, 2020	John 16:16–24
Monday, March 9, 2020	Philippians 4:4–5
Wednesday, March 11, 2020	Psalms 96:1–13
Friday, March 13, 2020	Jude 24–25
Sunday, March 15, 2020	John 14:25–31
Monday, March 16, 2020	Isaiah 53:4–6
Wednesday, March 18, 2020	Hebrews 13:20–21
Friday, March 20, 2020	Romans 12:18–21
Sunday, March 22, 2020	John 2:1–11
Monday, March 23, 2020	Psalms 68:4–10
Wednesday, March 25, 2020	Psalms 145:1–21
Friday, March 27, 2020	Ephesians 4:31–32
Sunday, March 29, 2020	John 10:11–18
Monday, March 30, 2020	Exodus 34:6–7
Wednesday, April 1, 2020	1 Corinthians 1:1–9
Friday, April 3, 2020	Matthew 11:28–30
Sunday, April 5, 2020	John 12:12–26
Monday, April 6, 2020	John 18:1–14
Tuesday, April 7, 2020	John 18:15–27
Wednesday, April 8, 2020	John 18:33–19:16a
Thursday, April 9, 2020	John 13
Friday, April 10, 2020	John 19:16b–37
Sunday, April 12, 2020	John 20:19 – 21:19

The Fruit of the Spirit is...

Love

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1–13

Key Verse: ¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

REFLECTION BY LIZ EDRINGTON:

Many of us are familiar with the 1 Corinthians passage on love. It's on plaques, it's on mugs, and it's commonly used in weddings. We love hearing about love. It makes us feel good.

But we often fail to pause long enough to consider what this passage is actually inviting us to, and what Lent points to in its long wait.

If we make it to verse 8, we read that “Love never fails.” I don't know about your love, but I know that mine fails. It's fickle, it's more conditional than I'd like, and it gets tired.

But time and again, we see the relentless, faithful, pursuing Love who is Jesus Christ persevere. He is the perfect embodiment of love, the perfect picture of what we are made for. He resists temptation after temptation in the desert, He endures persecution, rejection, and abandonment by those He's closest to. He lays down His very life to rescue those of us who offer our love to every other thing. His love is costly, it's bloody, and by His grace, it meets us where we are.

I know of no other Love that suffers *with*, that serves, and that dies to make lovely that which is unlovely. This is no cushy throw pillow with embroidery on it. This is our God, incarnate, saving His people in the most preposterous, backward way. The cross is the ultimate picture of where love never fails. And the resurrection invites us into the safe dependence and power that being united with Christ offers.

PRAYER:

Lord, would you make us more and more a people who love with your love, and who lay our lives down for the sake of others. Would you convince us, afresh, of the ways in which Love Incarnate redefines our identities and our lives. Amen.

1 JOHN 4:7-21

Key Verse: ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

REFLECTION BY CATHERINE ELDRIDGE:

“If God loved me, why would he let this be happening to me? I wouldn’t treat MY son this way!” I was shocked by my friend’s outburst but soon realized I secretly felt the same way. My circumstances were painful, too, and I often felt God could not possibly love me and allow my life to be so difficult.

Eventually, I began to notice certain Scripture passages that apparently I had skimmed over in the past. Our passage today was one of them. How could I have missed it? God loves me. Regardless of what’s going on today, his love for me was concretely established long ago in the death of his Son. For me. For my sinful self. Before I was born. Before I ever realized I was a slave to sin and could never free myself, the greatest need of my life had already been met. No current need could possibly compete.

An amazing change began to take place in me and is continuing. Love oozes out. My heart, about the size of a walnut and as hard, is somehow softening, expanding, and leaking. God, who is love, is living inside me by his Spirit, and he is expressing himself. God loved me in Jesus of Nazareth on the cross. Nothing can ever undo that. His love is alive, still. His love for people I judge and criticize and gripe about astonishes me. What surprises me more is finding myself concerned about the welfare of these same people. He is letting me love them, too. God’s love, all because he first loved me.

PRAYER:

Dear Father, thank you for providing all we need through Jesus your Son. Thank you for never abandoning us in our lack of love but being in us a never-failing spring of love for yourself and others. Amen.

PSALM 136:1–26

Key Verse: ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

REFLECTION BY HANNAH BLOOMQUIST:

The phrase “for his steadfast love endures forever,” is repeated 26 times throughout this psalm. Preceding each repetition we are reminded of His power, His Lordship, His creation, His deliverance, His defeats, His rescues, and His provisions. All of this flows from the theological foundations given in the first verse: the call to give thanks, the knowledge that He is good, and the promise of His steadfast love.

“Give thanks to the Lord because He is good.” But the reality is that sometimes we don’t always feel like He is good. We don’t feel like the death of our loved one, the loss of a job, the pain of a chronic health problem, the betrayal of a friend, is within the realm of God’s goodness. But the call to give thanks is not a call to slap on a smile and force gratitude for pain so we don’t appear unchristian. The call to give thanks is built on the knowledge that God is good and righteous, which means that He cannot bring any form of evil upon us. We might not give thanks for the effects of evil upon us, but I can give thanks that God will not make me suffer pain alone, that He will bring about justice, and that He has a purpose in all things, “for His steadfast love endures forever.”

This steadfast love, translated from the Hebrew word *hesed*, means “covenantal faithfulness.” This love is most attractive and compelling because it communicates complete devotion, and absolute faithfulness despite the continual rebellion of God’s people. When we know and believe this truth, we grow aware and can repent of the lesser lovers we have allowed to captivate our hearts; those idols that will never remain faithful or fulfill. For it is only “His steadfast love that endures forever.”

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you that you will never fall out of love with us and that you will always remain faithful. May we abide and live into that truth. Amen.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

REFLECTION BY JUD DAVIS:

The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) is the daily prayer of Jews both ancient and modern. At the heart of that prayer is the idea of God’s oneness. When modern translations put LORD in all caps, it is to show that the Hebrew text is YHWH. Jews will not say YHWH out loud but rather replace it with “Adonai” (lit., “my Lords”). It’s almost as if God wanted the idea of his unity and the plurality within that unity to meet us at every turn. We see it in the word Elohim (usually “Gods”) but consistently used with singular verbs (i.e., In the beginning, he (that is, Elohim) created...). Thus, the spoken Shema literally says, “My Lords, our Elohim, my Lords is one.” The God of the Bible reveals himself as an “I” and a “We” at the same time. His I-ness does not negate the “We” aspect of his nature, nor vice-versa.

I wonder if God’s intent for us is to share the unity of nature (Christ’s heart given us in regeneration) and at the same time to develop the glories of our differences and gifts, opinions and personalities. I wonder if God means our differences as small-scale, impressionist-like images of the unity of essence and personal distinctions within himself. The new covenant promises according to Ezekiel 36:24 that YHWH will gather us (lit., mega-gather, radically gather). The inevitable result will be “then the nations will know that I am the LORD.”

PRAYER:

Father, Jesus Christ has earned our acceptance with you, and that entitles us to share in the unity you have created for us as members of your family. Help us begin to see the glories of the unity you have for us in heaven, and may that eschatological intrusion begin to be ours more and more through these challenging, relationally-fractured days. Amen.

The Fruit of the Spirit is...

Joy

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

REFLECTION BY LINDY OAKES:

What comes to mind when you encounter Paul's exhortation to "Rejoice...always"? As a lifelong music lover, I've usually thought of song lyrics like these: "Gray skies are gonna clear up. Put on a happy face." Or, "When you're smiling, the whole world smiles with you." Or I think of familiar advice: "Count your blessings." "These are just first world problems." "Look on the bright side." Happy tunes. Uplifting thoughts. Insufficient advice for rejoicing—especially ALWAYS.

Focusing on myself and MY work in rejoicing is a fast track to hopelessness, self-disgust and shame. Thankfully, the Lenten reminder of my failure and sin isn't the final word. Jesus' death and resurrection made a new way for me to rejoice—IN HIM.

Instead of jumping over the phrase "in the Lord" and trying to convince myself that rejoicing is, or should be, natural, I can start by being honest. I can admit my irritation, anger, sorrow, fear, confusion or shame to the One who loves me, died for me, and is in me. Only in Him can I authentically delight in what I know of WHO He is. Despite my circumstances, His character is ALWAYS constant and on that I can reflect and ultimately rejoice. Only then can I ever recognize the real "bright side."

PRAYER:

Lord, by your Spirit, please reveal my hopeless attempts to rejoice apart from You. Help me honestly tell you my feelings about whatever is happening in my life. Lead me to praise and trust You as I ponder the riches of Who You are. In the Lord. Always. Amen.

PSALM 96:1–13

Key Verses: ¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; ¹² let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

REFLECTION BY KEVIN ELLIS:

Part of my stretching routine when I'm out on the trails is to do crescent lunges. As I lean forward into my hip flexor, arch my back, raise my arms above my head and stretch my hands skyward, my gaze rises to the treetops, and hence, to the blue skies and heavens above. In a posture of worship, and surrounded by forest, rock, and river, I can't help but join all the earth in singing to the Lord a new song in blessing his name.

In the world of human affairs, I sometimes have a harder time “declaring his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.” I'm reminded during this season that just as assuredly as he established the earth and the heavens in Genesis, he has redeemed my sin nature and that of all the fallen world. He came to “open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness,” and he chooses to include us in his redemptive story!

All the things Jesus stood for—love and justice and forgiveness and kindness among people—he has won! The second half has been played; victory is assured. The Root of David has triumphed. He is making all things new. The Lord reigns!

PRAYER:

Oh Lord, we sing to you a new song, with all the earth! We declare your glory among all nations, your marvelous works among all the peoples! We ascribe to you, Lord, glory and strength. We bring ourselves as offerings, we worship you. Lord, in your splendor and majesty, beauty and holiness, we tremble before you. We rejoice with all the earth! Amen.

JUDE 24–25

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

REFLECTION BY CINDY ROLLINS:

As a sinner, this has always been my favorite benediction. In two short verses it sums up the entire Bible, knocks me completely down, lifts me right back up again, and tells me where to look both right this minute and forever. I find the whole thing vastly comforting.

I come to this benediction bloody and bruised. I have stumbled again. I come to this benediction with eyes on myself but immediately these verses shift the focus away from my stumbling to something beyond. I am led away from being the perpetual bumbler to being blameless. But that is not all; no, that is not all. Suddenly, I am being ushered into the presence of God with great JOY. How did that happen? Before you know it, I am lost completely in the glory, majesty, dominion, and authority of Jesus Christ our Lord. I am lost in him and I am found in him.

When I return to the reality of my daily life, my strategy for living has completely changed. Now I know where to keep my eyes. I have seen who came before, who is now, and who shall forever be. 1 John 3:2 says that “when he appears we shall be like him,” but Jude reminds me that I can draw on that future now and you can too.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the hope we have, in you, of not stumbling, of being blameless. Help us to imagine ourselves in light of these truths. Help us to respond to this gift with wonder and gratitude. Amen.

The Fruit of the Spirit is...

Peace

ISAIAH 53:4–6

Key Verse: ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

REFLECTION BY JOY CHERRICK:

Life is hard right now. Plans failed, dreams died on the vine, and then on top of that, a loved one was diagnosed with cancer. Life isn't wrapping up into a neat red bow. The wonder of it all is that in the face of these misbegotten plans and derailed dreams, I am finding Peace and Healing. How can this be?

In His mercy, through these painful experiences, God revealed idols residing deep in my heart. When idols come into light, that is when healing begins. The idols I face are "good things turned ultimate things," namely: comfort. I like being comfortable—which is not bad in itself. It's when I move heaven, earth and people to make myself comfortable that it becomes an idol. When I take my eyes off my own solutions to the problems at hand, ask forgiveness and place the difficult problems in His almighty hands—then peace and joy return.

Why can't I remember that God has proven again and again that HE is my comfort and HE is my provider? He knows my struggle and offers Peace. I find Healing and Peace by facing these idols because when I should be crushed by them, Christ was crushed in my place.

Facing idols is painful AND it brings us healing and peace—not because of our own work, but because Christ's work restores us to true peace. Sin of any measure causes sorrow and yet, instead of increasing our sorrow, he bears our sorrow. And what happens to us? We are healed and find peace.

PRAYER:

God of all comfort, bring me true healing and peace today. Amen.

HEBREWS 13:20–21

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

REFLECTION BY LANEY STAYTON:

The idea of peace seems nearly impossible in this day and age. That could be for many reasons—the news portrays a world in turmoil; systems are organized in ways that take advantage of the weak for profit; broken relationships seem to have no reconciliation in sight; and long-suffering circumstances drown us daily. For me, peace seems impossible at 5:00 p.m. when two screaming toddlers are demanding my attention to have their needs met and I am done with the day.

But here in Hebrews, peace is used to describe God, the God of peace. If that wasn't powerful enough, the personhood that the peace is found in is the same person that brought our Lord and Savior back from the dead. We can rest and trust in the God of peace because we have seen and experienced His resurrecting power. It is easy for me to get wrapped up in the circumstances around me and let them dictate the state of my being. I need to be reminded daily of this truth: my God is the God of peace.

The other amazing part is he doesn't leave it there. In verse 21, it goes on to say that the God of peace through Jesus Christ will equip us with everything good to do his will for his glory. And we can trust that God will do just that, for the Father equipped his own Son for the hard, long-suffering work Jesus carried out here on earth (Isaiah 49).

PRAYER:

Father God, thank you for being the God of Peace. Help me to be shaped by that truth rather than the circumstances around me. Through Jesus Christ, may the peace I find in you propel me to faithfully carry out your will, not mine, for your glory. Amen.

ROMANS 12:18–21

Key Verse:

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

REFLECTION BY LAURA ELLIS:

In our brokenness, it is impossible for us to live in peace with everyone all the time. Some people hurt us. Some people just push our buttons!

It doesn't matter what others do or don't do. We have a responsibility to actively do our part to live in peace with others. We should NOT be the reason that peace doesn't exist. We are called to do the best we can with God's help to live in peace with others. Pride, self-protection, selfishness, and a host of other things make it hard.

In the same chapter in Romans, Christians are also told to leave vengeance to God, not to repay evil for evil, to give food to enemies and to overcome evil with good. Regardless of what others do or say, we are to take the high road.

We can't do all this by ourselves. I am thankful for this verse as it clearly brings me back to humble reliance on the LORD. I can't imagine living in peace with others without God's grace.

PRAYER:

LORD, thank you for not leaving us by ourselves to attempt to live in peace with others. Lord, we need you. By your grace, help us to see and do what is needed to keep and restore our relationships with others. Amen.

The Fruit of the Spirit is...

Patience, Kindness, Goodness,
Faithfulness, Gentleness, &
Self-control

PSALM 68:4–10

Key Verses:

⁹ Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished; ¹⁰ your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

REFLECTION BY JOYCE MCPHERSON:

For many of us, sorrow and suffering are the low points of our lives. The psalmist compares our process of grief to a desert journey. We feel on the point of collapse, but the Scripture reminds us to thirst for the Lord. He provides for the needy. One of the hardest times of my life was during our struggle with infertility. The Lord drew me closer to Himself, and it was a powerful growth step for me to give everything to the Lord, including the children that I might never have. I was reminded that the Lord is my inheritance and the fullness of life is found in Him. I still consider this time of sorrow as a spiritual touchstone for my life.

Earlier in Psalm 68, God is called by His covenant name because our loving Yahweh brings rain in abundance. He turns the desert into a dwelling place. He rains provision on us in His goodness. Our suffering seems painful in the moment, but it makes God's comforting love even more satisfying. As Jesus later says to us, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). During this Lenten season, let us bring our burdens to Him, knowing that our loving Heavenly Father provides for the needy.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for restoring us through the abundance of your goodness. Please lead us through the desert places of the soul. Make us thirst for you and find our fulfillment in you. May we dwell with you and rejoice in your provision. Amen.

PSALM 145:1-21

Key Verse: ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.

REFLECTION BY MARY ELIZABETH BURTON:

This life often reminds me of a hike. At a trailhead you picture a beautiful vista at the. But before you get to that view there are unexpected twists and turns and the inevitable sprained ankle. There are moments when the view of the end is veiled and feels unattainable. Despair sets in and the thought creeps into mind: “I just don’t know if I can go on.”

The Psalms have navigated a lifelong hike for me guiding me through the prickly and painful places in life, the deep valleys along with the joys—always leading me back to the fundamental purpose of my life (of our lives): glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

That’s exactly what the psalmist is inviting us to in Psalm 145, to look to the purpose, to join with him in a song of praise to the God who is eternal and the God who is near, who all along has faithfully carried us. Reading the Psalms, we’re always pointed back to Jesus.

As I read about my own fear, Jesus is my good shepherd who is always with me, who lays down his life for me. As I read Psalms about sin that reveal the darkest parts of my soul, Jesus is the healing forgiveness of God who washes me clean. As I read of sorrow, lament and longings unfulfilled, Jesus is the one who weeps tears with mine and promises to wipe away those tears. As I read of joy, Jesus is my joy, sitting at the right hand of God the father. He is indeed faithful. Like the psalmist, I want to take note of God’s words and his promises, his actions and provisions for me, savor his goodness and share it.

PRAYER:

Eternal and unchanging God, would you remind us afresh that you are the source, sustenance and goal of our lives. You are what you do and you do what you say. Help this truth shape how we live. Amen.

EPHESIANS 4:31–32

³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

REFLECTION BY HERB WARD:

When our children were small, they sometimes had difficulty being kind to each other. Disagreements in the playroom would devolve into arguments and they would speak to one another in ways that did not become conversation between a brother and sister. So Kathy took Ephesians 4:32 and wrote it in large letters on notecards and posted it all over the house. On the refrigerator, the bathroom mirror, the headboard of their beds, there it was: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.” When we had family devotions, we emphasized it, and we prayed that the Lord would make it real for us all. The transformation was slow but steady. Disagreements still occurred, but now there was a genuine attempt to hear the other’s heart, and to work things out in a way that honored their relationship as brother and sister, and that honored Jesus.

Paul is writing to believers in Ephesians 4. It seems impossible that some of them were engaging in such ungodly behavior: rage & anger, brawling & slander, every kind of malice. But disagreements happen within the body of Christ. That’s inevitable in a fallen world. It is how we deal with them that matters. Paul is contending that we must ask the Spirit of Christ to enable us to “put off the old self,” and to “put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). Patience and kindness are not natural to us in our “old self.” They are the fruit of the Spirit of Christ. Jesus, send us the Helper!

PRAYER:

Father God, please enable us by the power of your Holy Spirit to be disciples who walk in kindness and compassion, showing patience and love to one another as we seek to honor Jesus. Amen!

EXODUS 34:6-7

⁶ The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

REFLECTION BY CHAD DIRKSE:

The drama surrounding this passage is astounding. While Moses was in the presence of God on Mount Sinai, the people of Israel turned their allegiance towards a golden calf. At this moment, the full wrath of God would have been justified. Yet, God hears the pleas of Moses and relents from the disaster he had spoken of bringing on his people. The people had no claim to such mercy but the true character of God is revealed yet again in his persistent love and unwavering trustworthiness.

Exodus 34:6-7 are some of the most quoted verses in the Old Testament. As God passes by Moses, he defines his character clearly and shines a glorious light for the path forward. The meaning and implications of his name include steadfast love, faithfulness, forgiveness and justice. At a moment where justice would have allowed for God to reject the people of Israel, he instead renews his covenant with them and promises to bless them and the nations, despite knowing that the people who had just recently forsaken him would do so again.

As we recognize our own faithlessness and forsake God for idols that pale in comparison to his character, we rejoice that we can rest safely in his persistent love and unwavering trustworthiness for mercy and forgiveness.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, you stand with us, an unfaithful people, to equip us for faithfulness through union with Christ, our Savior and King. Remind us again of your persistent love and unwavering trustworthiness as we let your character be known in our home, church, society, and culture.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1–9

Key Verse: ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION BY CRYSTAL HOLLAND:

I am in a season where my need of Jesus is every hour. It is what I like to call a “fleshy need” of Jesus. I have a 2-year-old and a 4-month-old and I am tired all the time. My need for Jesus is not one for more faith, more boldness, or more time to evangelize; instead, it is rooted in exhaustion and weariness. My prayers are redundant in the desperate plea for sleep for my son and thus for me.

I know that the Lord is good. I have seen his goodness more in the past two years of motherhood, than in any other season of my life. The tangible answer to my prayers for a nap to last “just 30 minutes longer” or for the sun to come out so that we can go outside—these are simple prayers, rooted in my fleshy need to endure the long, hard days. But the Lord is good, and loves to give good gifts to his children.

In my weakness; in those quiet, lonely hours of the morning, I have been reminded over and over again that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain me to the end. God sustains us not in loneliness or apart from him, but in fellowship with him through the Son. The Triune God draws us into his loving embrace, and in his goodness sustains us there, making us guiltless, not lacking in any gift, equipped for each day. He is faithful to these promises, and he is faithful to his beloved children. The Lord longs for us to find our sustenance in his good fellowship.

PRAYER:

Lord, I need thee every hour. Draw me into your loving embrace. Create in me a heart that longs for you, and delights in your goodness. I praise you for your faithfulness and give thanks for the tangible ways you reveal your goodness to your beloved. Amen.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

REFLECTION BY NATALIE NORTHCUTT:

There is something about an invitation that is unparalleled. Being loved and accepted by friends and family makes us feel whole, but the intentionality of an invitation is a unique joy. What a good God is the One who frees us from ourselves and the sin which entangles us, and offers us himself instead.

So what does it mean to accept this invitation? The strongly worded “come to me” commands our submission to the throne, yet this acknowledgement of our finitude draws us to the Father, the caretaker. Abba doesn’t say “be better,” or “clean yourself up,” but he invites us into his presence continually. He promises gentleness and rest, not condemnation or anger.

One commentator points out that the “heavy laden-ness” we are escaping could actually apply to the legalism of the Pharisees. So whether your temptation is to perfectionism or reckless debauchery, Yahweh will carry your burden. Humility is a necessary attitude in this process of giving up burden. This recognition of dependence should not push us away, but remind us that the love of the father is unshakable, not our own desire to save ourselves.

PRAYER:

Oh loving Father, remind me to be in your presence in every moment and season of life. You are the provider of rest; allow me to give up what I grip so tightly. Help me to desire you the way you long to be with your children. Let me take your easy burden and feel refreshed. Amen.

ASH WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 26TH AT 6:00 P.M.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

APRIL 9TH AT 6:00 P.M.

GOOD FRIDAY

APRIL 10TH AT 12:00 P.M.