

Celebrating the Season of Lent



Theme: The Gift of Life

The great irony of Jesus' life is that his enemies sought his death because of his ability to give life. In the Gospel of John, we are told that Jesus is the bread of life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the resurrection and the life. Jesus tells us that his purpose for coming was that we might have life and have it more abundantly. In one of the most famous sayings from the gospel, Jesus proclaims that God so loved the world that he sent his own son, that those who believe might not perish but have eternal life. At the conclusion of the gospel, the author tells us that the reason he wrote the gospel was that you might come to believe in Jesus and that through this belief, you might have life in his name.

When Jesus raises his friend Lazarus from the dead, he is not performing a magic trick for the delight of the observing crowd. Nor is he doing a favor for a beloved friend. Rather, he is giving the gift of life, the gift for which God had sent his own son. The resuscitation of Lazarus is a foreshadowing of the resurrection of Jesus. And the resurrection of Jesus is a foreshadowing of the gift of resurrection God promises to those who believe. That gift promises life eternal. But, importantly, the gift of eternal life does not begin after we die but right now, in the midst of the dizzying pace of present living. The raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus certainly point to the gift of life without end. Trusting in that promise allows us to truly live now. In the film "Braveheart," Mel Gibson's character, William Wallace, states, "Every man dies, not every man truly lives." The gift of eternal life is not only a promise concerning our future. It is also an invitation to shape the substance of our lives now. We shall all die one day. To trust in God's promise however is to accept God's call to truly live now. As we continue to celebrate the season of Lent, ask yourself, what would my life look like if I truly trust in God's promise of life now and forever.

Prayers

Prayer for Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

God of Life,

There are so many examples in the Christian scriptures in which Jesus affirms the gift of God's life that is offered to everyone. From the raising of Lazarus to Jesus' own proclamation of eternal life to Jesus' resurrection from the dead celebrated at Easter, we lead our lives in light of the gift of life you offer us. Give us the courage to live as you have called us to live, and to share the gift of this life with others, proclaiming the love you have for all. In your name we pray, Amen.

Prayer for Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Living God,

The gift of life is so precious in your eyes, that you sent your only son to share with us life abundant. Help us to promote life in our actions and words, helping others see the value of their own lives, and the meaning it has for our world. Your promise of everlasting life starts here on earth, as it is in heaven. Trusting in this promise, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Everlasting God,

Believing that the resurrection of Jesus leads to eternal life, we come before you, asking for your guidance that we might daily live life to the fullest. The substance of our lives is a testament to our love for you. Through challenges and celebrations, help us to be grateful for each moment of life, appreciating its value and its ability to draw us closer to you. Amen.

Prayer for Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

God of the living,

The gift of Lazarus' new life was met with great celebration. His sisters and friends were astonished and grateful for the gift Jesus had given them. May we likewise celebrate the gift of life, a gift given not only to Lazarus, but to each of us. Help us each day to know that we are loved and cherished by you, celebrating that gift each day. In gratitude for your love, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Compassionate God,

There are so many people that walk through this life, without truly living. Help us to extend the compassionate ministry of Jesus to all, that they may know the value of their life. Life is precious, and so is every person that walks this earth. May we be witnesses of your love to all people that they come to understand the importance of their one, precious life. We pray in your name. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

What concretely do I plan to do to participate in the season of Lent and how will it draw me closer to God?

How will my participation in the season of Lent renew my commitment to extend the compassionate ministry of Jesus to others, especially people who are poor and vulnerable?

How might my celebration of the season of Lent bring forth new life for me and others?