



AT THE *Foot*   
OF THE *Cross*  
2024

Reflections on the Gospel of St. John Part 1



Diocese of West Malaysia

## **DIOCESE OF WEST MALAYSIA**

No. 214, Jalan Pahang,  
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Malaysia

## **AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS**

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## **SCRIPTURE REFERENCES**

Most Scripture references are taken from

Holy Bible, New International Version® (Anglicised), NIV™

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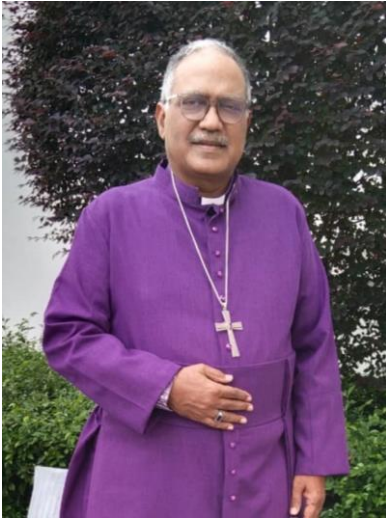
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## *FORWARD*



My dear friends,

Warm greetings in Jesus' Name.

The season of Lent has dawned upon us - for many it is a very special season of the Church, for some this season is no different than any other season like Christmastide while some are indifferent to it.

As most of us are aware, Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting and giving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. It is not just about abstaining from certain kinds of food especially meat but more importantly it is a true inner conversion of heart as we seek to

follow Christ to the Cross. In fact, we can go further than abstaining by including other Christian virtues which we take for granted, for example, in serving the "least of our brethren." Pope Francis gave a good example of washing the feet of prisoners. This makes Lent very radical as St. John Chrysostom exhorted: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2446).

Celebrating Lent by praying, fasting and giving can make Jesus' sacrifice on Good Friday and His resurrection on Easter even more meaningful. It is a time we set aside each year to remember the profound and unconditional love of God that is poured out through Christ Jesus on the Cross, his amazing grace through his defeat of death, sin and Satan and his resurrection that brings victory and eternal life to us. This season also has a solemn and penitential character to it.

Beginning with the imposition of Ashes as a reminder to us that we are indeed dust and to dust we shall return but God grants us the gift of eternal life. While the imposition of ashes reminds us of our mortality and our sin, it also reminds us of Jesus' defeat of death and sin on the cross, and the atonement for our sin by his blood (Ephesians 1:7). With the sign of the cross drawn in ashes, we are also reminded of our baptism, as we were marked with the cross upon our forehead and upon our heart as one redeemed by Christ Jesus, who secured for us eternal redemption from sin and eternal life (Matthew 28:16-20; Hebrews 9:12). This penitential character is also shown in the colour used during this season of the church year. The colour purple is used by the church to remind us of the nature and character of the season. The colour purple is used as a colour of penitence. This character is carried over in the liturgical words we use in worship where we omit the "Alleluias" and Gloria in Excelsis until Easter.

The word "Lent" itself comes from the old English word "lencten" that means lengthen - referring to the season of spring and longer daytime in Europe and other parts of the world. The length of Lent represents the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness before beginning

his ministry. The purpose of Lent is to draw closer to God through prayer, repentance, and self-examination. Lent bestows an opportunity to come to terms with the human condition and to receive the overflowing grace that God has to offer. This unique Lenten Devotionals produced by both the clergy and the laity of our Diocese is an instrument to lead us in this journey with God. And so, I invite the whole diocese to a meaningful celebration of the gifts of Lent and Easter.

The Diocese is grateful to Daphne and Jason, who given a short time have produced this devotional together with selected members of the clergy and laity.

**THE RIGHT REVEREND DR D. STEVEN ABBAROW**  
**DIOCESAN BISHOP**  
**DIOCESE OF WEST MALAYSIA**

## *NOTE FROM THE EDITOR*

I would like to express my gratitude to Rt. Rev. Dr Steven Abbarow for entrusting me with the task of putting together the Lenten Devotion *At the Foot of the Cross 2024*. My heartfelt thanks also go out to all those who contributed in writing the articles. As this task was assigned to me only in mid-November 2023, the writers only had about five weeks to submit their articles. I would also like to acknowledge my editorial team comprising of Ms. Satkunamary Gnanakkan and Ms. Daphne Rosaline Henry Thomas who helped edit and proofread the content and Mr. Joash Ethan Selvaraj and Ms. Katriyn-Ann Aruna Raj who worked on the cover design.

The Lenten Meditation for the year 2024 is based on the Gospel of John chapters 1 – 15 and chapter 20:1-10. Unlike the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (also known as the Synoptic Gospels), the Gospel of John is a “spiritual gospel” as asserted by Clement of Alexandria in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. He observed that the Synoptic Gospels dealt with the “bodily facts” about Jesus Christ while the Gospel of John focusses on deep spiritual interest. It is about who Jesus is in relation to God.

At the onset of the Gospel, we are told he is the “Word” which brought things into being who became flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. During his three-year ministry he reveals God’s power through miraculous signs such as turning water into wine, healing the sick and raising the dead. He reveals himself through the seven “I am” statements and by his resurrection, he shows that those who believe in him will have eternal life.

The Gospel of John was the last Gospel to be written and was completed around 90 AD. Traditionally, it is thought to be written by John the son of Zebedee, the disciple whom Jesus loved (although there is a dispute among scholars about who is the disciple whom Jesus loved). The purpose for the writing of this Gospel is so that people will be drawn into a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Since we are created to have a relationship with God, the Gospel of John tells us about Jesus the Messiah and draws people into that compelling relationship with God by presenting us with a portrait of Jesus that is engaging and profound.

As we read the texts and the devotions from Ash Wednesday through to the Holy Week and Easter, may we be enriched and drawn into a deeper relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

It is our hope and prayer that *At the Foot of the Cross 2024* will be a faithful companion in our journey through Lent 2024. God bless.

**THE RT. REV. DR. JASON SELVARAJ  
FOR THE EDITORIAL TEAM**

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1. <https://enterthebible.org> accessed on 25 January 2024
2. Kanagaraj, J. J., & Kemp, I, S. (2000). *Asia Bible Commentary Gospel of John*. Bangalore: The Theological Book Trust of Bangalore, India.



*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.*

*John 1:1–2*

### **WHO IS JESUS TO YOU?**

As we begin this Lenten season, we begin with a text that highlights the deity of Jesus. In the beginning was the Word. The “Word” in verse 1 is God himself. Verse 14 also tells us that the “Word” became flesh and dwelt among us. Who is this “Word” then?

A very crucial question all of us must personally answer is the question of, “Who is Jesus?” Some people and groups throughout history have said that Jesus is merely a good moral teacher with good moral values. Thus, our response to that would be to copy the good example that Jesus has given us. Some have said that Jesus is only a prophet who has come to bring the message of God. Some have said that Jesus is an example of their social justice movements, and their response is to fight against the same injustices that Jesus stood against.

Now while there are truths to these statements above, it is simply insufficient and frankly not good enough. You see, Christianity makes a very bold and exclusive claim that Jesus is God. From the Council of Nicea, Chalcedon, to all churches today, we have been holding on to and defending this age-old Christian orthodoxy of the deity of Jesus. That is something we must continue to do till the day our LORD returns.

Now why must Jesus be God you may ask? Here are two reasons for us to ponder upon.

1. If Jesus was only a finite being, then he could not die for the sins of the world. But if Jesus is the infinite God, he can die for the sins of the whole world.
2. If Jesus was only a man, then our response to him would not need to be one of submission of our lives and worship of his majesty. But if he is God, our response should be vastly different.

Indeed, let us be thankful and be in awe of who Jesus is. He is the creator of the world (v 3). He is the giver of life (v 4). He is the light of the world (vs 5, 8, 9). He is the Saviour of people (v 12). He is the glory of God (v 14).

Thus, let us begin this Lenten season by being in awe of the Son of God. For us to stop from our busy lives, to pause, to reflect, and think about Jesus, who did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but humbled himself, to die for us on the cross. Amen.



*FURTHER REFLECTION*

Who is Jesus to you? Is he just a good moral teacher? Is he just a person who blesses you? How have you responded to Jesus every single day of your life so far in 2024?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Son, who was with you from the beginning of time, and who is of equal substance with you Father. Lord Jesus, we acknowledge that you are the Son of God. We acknowledge your supreme authority over our lives. We are overflowing with thankfulness for who you are, and that we can now be in a relationship with the triune God forevermore because of what you have done.

In your precious name we pray, Amen.

**Mr. Daniel Woon**  
**St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur**

*The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'*

*John 1:29*

## WITNESSING FOR CHRIST

In our passage today, we encounter John the Baptist, immersed in the ministry of baptism and calling people to repentance, urging them to return to God. The scene unfolds as he faces questions from the religious leaders who are unsettled by his actions. His response to these influential figures was a pivotal moment for John, as the Pharisees held considerable power and could have made things difficult for him.

However, notice how John chooses to respond. His words bear no trace of fear or a desire for recognition. He refrains from claiming any titles or positions. Instead, John steadfastly adheres to his divine calling: preparing the hearts of Israel for the imminent arrival of the Lord. His response is a striking blend of humility and an unwavering commitment to fulfilling God's will, free from the fear of man.

John identifies himself simply as the voice beckoning to Israel, urging them to prepare for the coming of the Lord who brings salvation. He stands as a humble servant, shunning greatness and redirecting the attention of others solely to the Lord. As we witness John's proclamation of Jesus as the Lamb of God and his bold testimony despite the potential dangers — we're reminded of the imperative to exalt Christ above all else.

In our ministries and lives, the allure of seeking recognition, respect, power, or authority often tugs at us. However, John's example presents a different path, one that champions humility and propels us to embrace the mission God has entrusted to us: proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ. John emerges as a beacon, testifying to the Lord in such a manner that leaves no doubt about his worthiness and identity.

Entering workplaces, family gatherings, or community events to proclaim the Gospel might seem daunting. Yet, John teaches us how to faithfully bear witness to Jesus, giving Him the entirety of the glory. Through this, we faithfully discharge the mission bestowed upon us, akin to John's steadfast fulfilment of his purpose.

Let us etch into our hearts the identity of Jesus the Lamb of God who comes to die on the cross. Unlike the sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament which needed to be sacrificed again and again, through his perfect sacrifice Jesus makes complete atonement for the sins of his people once and for all. Therefore, because forgiveness and salvation can only come through the blood of the Lamb of God, he stands as the sole hope for our friends, family, and neighbours.

Jesus the Son of God, upon whom the Holy Spirit descended, is to be rightfully exalted above all things. His magnificence and boundless mercy must resound in a world that is dying without him and so we must follow the footsteps of John and proclaim him to the world.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

**Our Testimony:** John's testimony about Jesus carried weight and truth through his actions and words throughout his life. What does our testimony about Jesus look like in our work and our lives? Are we pointing people to Christ or are we merely exalting our blessings or our character?

**Magnifying Christ:** John's primary focus was to magnify Christ. In what ways can we intentionally redirect attention from ourselves to Christ in our daily lives? How might our actions, words, and attitudes better reflect Christ's magnificence rather than our desires or ambitions?

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, help us to embrace humility and faithfully trust in Jesus so that we may go forth to proclaim his gospel to all. May we live in such a way that the world can see the hope of life everlasting that we have through the Gospel. Open our eyes to truly recognize and value the great salvation that Jesus brings and help us point others toward him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

**Mr. Dinesh Natorajan**  
**St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur**

*When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"*

*When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.*

*Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"*

*They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying"?*

*"Come," he replied, "and you will see."*

*So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.*

*John 1:36-39*

### COME, SEE, AND FOLLOW CHRIST

The events in this passage continue with John the Baptist being with two of his disciples when Jesus walks by. At this, John repeats his imperative the second time in this chapter, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (v 36). Something happens this time around. Immediately heeding their master's words, John's disciples follow Jesus. Noticing that he was being followed, Jesus asks them what they are looking for. In response, they respectfully ask Jesus where he is staying. Jesus then invites them, "Come and you will see." (v 39). They not only saw where he was staying but also stayed with him. Jesus' simple and gentle invitation to come and see him transformed their lives greatly as we will soon see in subsequent passages of St John's Gospel, particularly as they witnessed his death, resurrection, and ascension.

This "Come and you will see" pattern of invitation is repeated throughout verses 40 to 46 in various ways as Jesus gathers his disciples: A disciple of John named Andrew invites his brother, Simon Peter, to see the Messiah and ends up following Jesus; Jesus comes to Philip and tells him, "Follow me.". Philip in turn invites his friend, Nathanael to see Jesus saying that this is the Messiah whom Moses and the prophets foretold in the Scriptures.

However, Nathanael was a different case than the rest. He was doubtful that Jesus was the Messiah due to Jesus' hometown – Nazareth. Undaunted by Nathanael's scepticism, Philip repeats the invitation to him in a simpler yet gentle phrase, "Come and see" (v 46). In verses 47 to 51, we see that Nathanael eventually goes to see Jesus and is astounded by his omniscience which removes all doubt. He immediately acknowledges Jesus as God's promised King.

But that is not all. Jesus promises Nathanael that he will see much more than what he had just experienced (v 50). As he follows Jesus, he will see Jesus Christ as the ladder between heaven and earth, the house of God and the gate of heaven (cf. Gen. 28:12-17). This same promise to Nathanael also applies to us as disciples of Christ Jesus. Jesus calls us to come and see, and then follow him always in our life. As we continually obey him and grow in love and faith, he gradually reveals his grace, power and glory to us in the process.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Who can I invite to come to Jesus?

How can I see him as revealed in the Bible and follow him as my Lord and Saviour?

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Almighty and most merciful Father, whose Son calls us to follow him. We humbly ask that you grant us an increase of faith, hope, and love so that we may evermore live according to your will and commandments. We also ask that you call those whom we love but do not know you, and so draw them to yourself so that we may be one under Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

**Mr. Parady Chaiphakdi**  
**St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur**

*What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

*John 2:11*

### FORETASTE OF A COMING BANQUET

The story of John 2:1-12 paints a vivid scene at the wedding in Cana, where the celebration dimmed as the wine supply ran dry. Across all cultures and eras, the responsibility of the host to provide abundant food and drink is a societal expectation. Faced with potential embarrassment, Mary, with a mother's concern, approached Jesus for assistance. However, Jesus' response, addressing her as "woman" instead of "mother", unveils a deeper layer. It signals that Jesus, in his role as the chosen Messiah, speaks with divine authority beyond familial ties. His remark about the hour, often associated with his impending crucifixion, hints that the time for public revelation of his Messianic identity has not yet arrived.

In orchestrating a solution without unveiling his Messianic identity to the public, Jesus quietly transforms the water into wine. Only a select few, his disciples and the servants, witnessed this miraculous act which spares the host from disgrace. As a result of this miracle, the quality of this new wine earns high praise from the master of the feast.

Drawing from Old Testament prophecies, the imagery of banquets and wine frequently symbolizes the awaited New Creation (Isaiah 25:6-9; Hosea 2:22; Joel 2:19, 24, 3:18; Amos 9:13, 14; Zechariah 9:17). In our passage today, the water-to-wine miracle is a sign witnessing to us that Jesus has ushered in the age of New Creation by his first coming. Thus, all of the expectations of the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in him. And in turn, this water-to-wine miracle serves as a foretaste to the grand banquet—the marriage supper of the Lamb, as described in Revelation 19:9 which all believers eagerly anticipate at his second coming.

At the end of this narrative, the apostle John underscores that Jesus revealed his glory through this miracle. While the immediate impact is the rescue of the wedding celebration, the true significance lies in the disciples' response—that they believed in Jesus.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

As we navigate the Lenten season by reflecting on the disciples' belief sparked by the wedding miracle, it is a joy for us to know that; today we have a more profound sign—the death and resurrection of Jesus, which manifested his glory at a greater level. Furthermore, the long-awaited Messiah's identity is publicly unveiled. Hence, like the disciples, we are called to trust in Jesus as our Redeemer from sin and death. Because of what Jesus has done on the cross, there will be a glorious marriage supper awaiting us in the New Creation. And

in this coming marriage supper, we will experience the ultimate union and intimacy with our Lord Jesus.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, we express gratitude for unveiling the identity of Jesus as the chosen Messiah through the profound sign of his death and resurrection. May we, inspired by the disciples, continue to trust in him, leading us to the awaited union and intimacy with your Son during the promised marriage supper at the end of the age. We offer this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Mr. Darren Lee**  
**St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur**



*His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'*  
*John 2:17*

### ZEALOUS FOR THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

The Synoptic Gospels recorded that Jesus cleansed the Temple towards the end of his ministry on earth. (cf. Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46) whereas John recorded that Jesus cleansed the Temple at the beginning of His ministry. John may have a special purpose in putting the episode of the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

The Temple was understood by the Jews as the dwelling place of God on earth. In the Gospel of John, God comes to dwell in the person of Jesus Christ (cf. John 1.14). At the beginning of his ministry on earth, Jesus, the Son of God wanted to set the right direction for the Jews. The Temple as the House of God should be a place of reverence, worship, and praise for God.

*<sup>13</sup> When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.*

The buying and selling were there in the outer court of the Temple to assist those who travelled from afar. Unfortunately, the business of buying and selling has degenerated into a noisy market atmosphere with no regard for the presence of the Holy God. In addition, what had begun as a service to the worshipers had, under the corrupt rule of the temple authorities fallen into the exploitation of the poor weary travelers. Thus, the Temple of God had become “a den of robbers” (Matthew 21:13).

Therefore, at the start of his ministry, Jesus needs to take drastic action and chase away those “thieves and robbers” in order to restore the reverence for God in the Temple (vs 13-16).

*<sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”*

This reference is taken from Psalm 69:9, where David was confessing his devotion to God even in his suffering. Although David was not permitted by God to build the Temple for him, nevertheless, he showed great devotion for the house of God. Jesus referred to the Temple as his Father's House. In the narrative found in Luke 2:41-50, where Joseph and Mary were anxiously looking for the boy Jesus, his reply to his earthly parents was “*Why were you searching for me?*” he asked. “*Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?*”

In response to the Jews who asked him about his authority in disturbing the peace in the Temple, Jesus' answer to them was "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.*"

The Jews were shocked by Jesus' answer as they remembered that it took 46 years to build the Temple and Jesus claimed to rebuild it in three days. Jesus' disciples later recalled that he was referring to his body. Here Jesus declared both to the Jews and his disciples that he would be the new Temple. The focus on worship in the future is not at Jerusalem in the Temple but on Jesus.

The church in a way has replaced the Temple and Jesus is the head of the Church. We are reminded that the Church is where Jesus is lifted up, honoured and glorified. Are we committed and passionate to making the church a holy place, a place of reverence where the name of Jesus is lifted up and glorified? Are we zealous for the house of the Lord? Jesus was. He was zealous for his Father's house.

John wanted to remind his readers that Jesus knew the hearts of humans and he did not need any testimony from anyone (vs 23-25). Jesus' words and mighty works were sufficient signs and evidence of his divinity.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Our bodies, the Temple of the Holy Spirit

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, the Apostle Paul exhorted believers to live holy lives as he reminded them,

*"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own."*

Living holy lives is one way we can honour God with our bodies.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Our heavenly Father, help us to be zealous for you. May whatever we do, be to honour and glorify your name.

**Venerable Soong Hoe Pin**  
**Archdeacon of the Upper North Archdeaconry**  
**Christ Church, Penang**

*Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.  
John 3:5-6*

### **BEING BORN OF THE SPIRIT**

In this passage, we have an exchange between a Pharisee, Nicodemus and Jesus, where Jesus completely upends Nicodemus' world by saying that only those born again can enter the Kingdom of God (vs 5-6).

Nothing of Nicodemus' credentials as a Pharisee, his status as a ruler, nor his wealth could guarantee entrance into God's Kingdom, because all of that belongs to the flesh, and belongs to this present world. This world of flesh is not fit for God's Kingdom because it is full of darkness and evil (vs 19-20).

However, what is truly amazing is that in verse 16 it is revealed that God loves the world, and sent his only Son into the world not to condemn it, but to save it that all who believe in the Son will have eternal life (be in the Kingdom of God). And we are told in verses 14-15 that the way that the Son saves the world is by being lifted up as Moses lifted the bronze snake.

Here, Jesus referred to an event in Numbers 21:4-9, where Israel incurred God's wrath by their rebellion and God sent venomous snakes as judgement but God also gave a remedy: anyone bitten would look upon the bronze snake Moses made and live. There was nothing magical about the bronze nor the statue, but rather, they were saved because they put their trust in God, obeyed him and looked to it and God in his mercy, accepts that faith and heals them in his grace.

Likewise, every single one of us has been fatally bitten by a serpent the very same serpent in Eden and is under the curse of sin. Therefore, John continues in verse 18, whoever does not believe is condemned already (as one bitten by the snake and refused to look up).

But whoever believes in Christ will NOT perish (v 16) and will NOT be condemned (v 18), because when we trust in Christ who was lifted up on the cross- we are born again to be sons of God by water and the Spirit. This is another Old Testament reference, this time in Ezekiel 36:25-27 where God promised his people that he will sprinkle clean water on them, clean them from their sin, and put his Spirit in them, that they may walk in his ways.

Jesus' use of these two references to the Old Testament would have not been lost on Nicodemus, as Pharisees were experts on the Scriptures. And just as Nicodemus needed to

stop thinking he could “earn” his way into God’s good graces and needs to be born again- so too it is true for us.

How have we been striving to earn God’s favour through our own efforts? If we have been doing so, we need to stop and repent.

This Lenten season, how can we instead be nurturing the new life of the Spirit which God has given us in Christ?

***FURTHER REFLECTION:***

Being born again of God (John 1:12-13) means we have a new identity and relationship with God: we no longer face God as a wrathful judge (as our sins rightly condemned us), but as loving Father - Father as Jesus knew God as Father. Therefore, we have a new life, a new identity in Christ.

How are we constantly shaped by this new identity, not just during Lent, but for the rest of the year as well?

***FOR INTERCESSION:***

Father, help us to stop trusting in our ability, our credentials, or anything that we have done but only fully trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross, lifted up for us, that we can ever hope to enter into your Kingdom.

We thank you, that in Christ, we are loved and cherished as your sons and daughters. Help us to live in light of the new life your Spirit gives to us, and to let go of anything of the flesh that would hinder us from loving Christ more.

We ask this in his name, Amen.

**Mr. Timothy Cheang**  
**St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur**

*He must become greater; I must become less.*

*John 3:30*

### HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?

Eulogies are spoken during funeral services. Usually, a member of the deceased family, a relative or a close friend will come forward to share concerning the person. They might recall some past events, words of advice that have been spoken or acts of kindness shown by the deceased.

You could say that sometimes one almost gets a snapshot of that person's life in those few minutes of speech. Those words are an expression of how the deceased will be remembered. They are a reminder of a life spent, and the legacy that was left behind.

John the Baptist too left a legacy. He went about in his ministry of baptizing those who would come to listen. His was one of calling people to repentance and preparing the way for the Master (John 1:23). He described Jesus in different glowing ways while at the same time deprecating himself.

In our reading today, John the Baptist was remembered as a humble man. He did not seek fame or fortune for himself but instead made it his life purpose to point his audience to Jesus Christ. He had many followers around him but he diverted them to Christ. He described Jesus as the coming Messiah (3:28), and the bridegroom (3:29). It was not about him but always Jesus Christ.

What was astonishing is that he saw that Christ has to increase, while he becomes less (3:30). That would include Christ's prominence amongst the people while he languished in jail and finally was beheaded (Matthew 14:6-12). Many will see this as a sad ending for one who has done much. But he will be remembered as a forerunner for Jesus.

For John the Baptist, eternal life is found in Jesus; "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them" (3:36). This is not merely mental or intellectual assent. It was to follow after Christ, to seek his truth and to abide or remain in him.

His humble and yet courageous character speaks of that one single mission – to live and serve his Master, the Christ.

How do we want to be remembered? Certainly, as a faithful wife/husband, a caring father/mother/child, a conscientious employer/employee and a committed church member. If we take John the Baptist as our model, we will want to be remembered as a humble servant

of God: as one who worships the Triune God and who points others to Jesus Christ, Saviour and Lord.

*FURTHER REFLECTION*

John finds his joy, not in grudgingly conceding victory to a superior opponent, but in wholeheartedly embracing God's will and the supremacy it assigns to Jesus.

D. A Carson, *The Gospel according to John, The Pillar NT Commentary*.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, by your grace, we desire and seek to live lives that glorify your name.

**Reverend Tan Meng Poo**  
**Priest in Charge of Hosanna Anglican Church, Johor Bahru**

*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.*

*John 4:23-24*

### THE MARK AND OBJECT OF TRUE WORSHIP

In our small church fellowship in Johor Bahru, we have amongst us, Indians, Chinese, Bidayuh, Myanmar and a half-Irish, coming together each Sunday to worship the Lord. Racial differences can either divide or be an excellent opportunity to exhibit Christian love and mutual understanding amid diversity.

In our narrative, the racial and religious divide between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is deep and wide. It traces to past centuries when the Kingdom of Israel after King Solomon was broken into 2 separate nations: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The parenthesis in John 4:9 leaves no doubt about the extent of the animosity, “for Jews do not associate with Samaritans”.

Notice that Jesus moved the conversation from the mundane issue of one-upmanship, “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well...” (4:12) to point to himself as the living water (4:13-14). The invitation to her was to follow Jesus for the gift of eternal life.

Then he told the woman that true worship is not confined to a place (4:19-22) but in the Spirit and in truth (4:23-24). Notice the focus was to worship the Father. He is the object of our worship, in corporate or private devotion. We pray the Holy Spirit in us would cause our hearts to praise and worship him from the depths of our soul. And that our worship will also be based on the truth of his Word.

As we seek to worship the Lord, we need to ask him to help us move away from mere formalism (just going through the motions as we recite portions in the Prayer Book) and to give us each a heart of worship that is deeply rooted in the truth of the Gospel – Christ incarnate, Christ crucified, Christ resurrected and Christ ascended.

We need to be cautious not merely to give our people a “feel good” factor when we come together weekly as a church. Worship is not about us, it is not entertainment or showmanship, but about our triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Where then is the fear of God and a sense of awe and wonder as we ponder on the Lord God in our worship, private or public? It comes as we lift Jesus in our midst, and recognize that he is the one to whom we are to give our devotion.



### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

In every congregation, God is looking for those who mean what they are singing. Who, from the heart, is saying these things to him? That is what worship is.

Ray Stedman (<https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/john>)

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Gracious Father, grant to your servants that deep sense of awe and reverence as we approach you in prayer and praise, whether individually, as a family or in our coming together each week.

**Reverend Tan Meng Poo**  
**Priest in Charge of Hosanna Anglican Church, Johor Bahru**

*'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.'*

*John 4:34*

### THE HARVEST IS RIPE FOR THE PICKING

There is no doubt whatsoever, we love our food. We live in a land of plenty and often we are spoilt for choice as to what and where to eat. Food is so important to us that we often structure our daily activities and events around meals.

The disciples had gone to the nearby town in search of food. They had brought something for Jesus and implored him to eat. His cryptic response, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about", puzzled his disciples.

Jesus emphasized that his priority was to do the will of him who sent him and to finish his work (4:34). He was referring to the will of the heavenly Father for the work of the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, seeking and doing the work of the Kingdom far outweighs his desire for food and drink. His source of satisfaction is to fulfil the plan of God for the Kingdom. That is what drives Jesus. That was his passion.

Then he referenced nature, where he highlighted that the fields are ripe for the harvest (4:36). The harvest is the men and women who would commit to Jesus, the Messiah and the Christ.

History of mission has recorded how some have sown and others have reaped. Adoniram Judson had a heart for India but on arriving there, was not permitted to leave the ship. He then sailed further to the then Burma. It took him 7 years to win his first Burmese convert, Ko Tha Byu who subsequently led handfuls of Karen families to Christ and soon the number of believers spread. There is now a vibrant church in Myanmar.

William Carey, an ordinary cobbler, decided to preach the Gospel in India. Despite all kinds of obstacles along the way, William Carey, now regarded as the father of modern missions, baptized his first Indian convert, Krishna Pal, after several years of sowing the seeds of the Gospel.

For Judson and Carey, their food was to do the will of the Father, who called them to the mission field.

Suppose each one of us make a commitment that we will seek to fulfil the will of the Father in our lives; in our family, school, workplace, community and church. Imagine the kind of impact that would make in our churches and community to which the Lord has called us.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Jesus lived to do God's will. That was the key to his spiritual sustenance - and to ours. We can hold the most reverent thoughts about God and the tenderest feelings, but if we do not surrender our will to God, we will receive little of the spiritual food he provides. Until the will is right, nothing is right!

R. Kent Hughes (*Preaching the Word Commentary*)

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, make me an instrument fit for your use.

**Reverend Tan Meng Poo**  
**Priest in Charge of Hosanna Anglican Church, Johor Bahru**

*The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.'*  
*'Go,' Jesus replied, 'your son will live.'* *The man took Jesus at his word and departed.*  
*John 4:49-50*

### THE LORD HAS SPOKEN

The Gospel writers authenticated Jesus as the Son of God through his preaching/teaching, healing and deliverance ministry. Ultimately, his death and resurrection remove all doubts that he is indeed the Saviour of the world, sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

Apart from his healing and deliverance ministry, the people were amazed at his teaching. The temple guards who were sent to arrest Jesus replied to the religious leaders, "No one ever spoke the way this man does," (John 7:46). In our narrative here, Jesus again spoke and what was spoken came through.

There came a royal official of Capernaum. His son was ill to the point of death (4:46). He was probably at his wit's end when he went to Jesus. He must have heard of the good things Jesus had done, and most likely of his healing ministry. Thus, he pleaded with Jesus, "...he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death." (4:47)

Jesus's first response seems curt and downright offensive, "unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe" (4:48). It was a rebuke to the man. Jesus saw through him - his desire was purely for healing for his son, and not for the eternal life that Jesus offered. Yet Jesus heard the desperate cries of a father and it was clear that he had compassion for the man and his son.

Jesus spoke those words of assurance, "go, your son will live". The man believed for the healing of his son (4:50).

The man's response was positive; "so the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way" (4:50). On his way back, he was told by his servant that his son had recovered, and when inquired, it was exactly the time that Jesus had given those words of assurance to him.

That led the official and his whole household to believe in Jesus as Saviour (4:53). May we also desire to hear from the Lord, through his Word, and find that spiritual refreshment in him.

Speak O Lord as we come to you  
 To receive the food of your Holy Word  
 Take Your truth, plant it deep in us

Shape and fashion us in your likeness  
That the light of Christ  
might be seen today  
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith  
Speak O Lord and fulfil in us  
All your purposes for your glory.

Keith Getty, Stuart Townend

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Now that he has welcomed the teaching of Christ, he publicly professes to be one of his disciples...he acknowledges Christ to be the Son of God and makes a profession of faith in his Gospel.

John Calvin (*The Crossway Classic Commentaries*)

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Lord, you continue to speak to us through your Word. May we each day draw strength, comfort, and encouragement to live for your glory, in the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us.

**Reverend Tan Meng Poo**  
**Priest in Charge of Hosanna Anglican Church, Johor Bahru**

*Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, 'See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.'*

*John 5:14*

### **WHICH IS PREFERRED – FORGIVENESS OF SINS OR PHYSICAL HEALING?**

Joni Eareckson Tada was 17 years old when she was involved in a diving accident. She became a quadriplegic and was paralysed from the shoulders down. She prayed countless times for divine healing and many others have prayed for her too. But now at age 75 (2023), she remains paralysed, often in great and excruciating pain. Some even questioned Joni for her lack of faith in the Lord to “claim” her healing.

However, over the years, her ministry, “Joni and Friends” has become a beacon of hope and light for those who have suffered physical, emotional and mental ailments. Hers was a message of hope in Jesus for anyone who is going through pain and suffering.

Here is a man who has been an invalid for 38 years. He was at the Pool of Bethesda where there was belief that one can be made well if they enter the pool when the water stirred.

When Jesus asked the man if he wanted to get well, his answer was at best, insipid. Perhaps he was jaded as he had been in this condition for years. He had no one to help him into the pool. Jesus spoke to the man to get up, pick up his mat and walk (v 8). The healing was instantaneous!

However, such a dramatic display of healing was met with scorn and opposition. That it happened on a Sabbath became a basis for contention for the Jewish leaders (v 10), “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry the mat”.

Nowhere in Scripture, does it say that it is unlawful for a person who had been healed of a paralysis to carry his bed. Nevertheless, as far as the Rabbis are concerned, that is work and therefore against the Sabbath, the carrying of something from one place to another.

The outward form was more important than the substance. Surely, this was an occasion for rejoicing. Alas, it was not so for the religious leaders who were fault-finding.

When Jesus met the man again, his message was to stop sinning or something worse may happen to him. Jesus nailed the issue to the heart of the Gospel – that man is in need of repentance and forgiveness of sins. Then John recorded that the man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well (v 15).

In that way, this account ended differently from yesterday's reading. The official, after witnessing his son being healed, went on to believe and put his trust in Jesus. Nothing is said of this man.

*FURTHER REFLECTION*

Joni Eareckson, in her physical challenge, nevertheless found forgiveness of sins, life in Christ and a life mission of serving others who need comfort, encouragement and hope in Jesus.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, thank you for the work of Christ at the Cross. I surrender my dreams, hopes and need for healing before the throne of grace. May I find rest in the God who calls me to himself.

**Reverend Tan Meng Poo**  
**Priest in Charge of Hosanna Anglican Church, Johor Bahru**



*...but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.  
John 5:18*

## WHO IS JESUS TO YOU TODAY?

### INTRODUCTION:

Jesus was continuously engaged in the ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing and spent his first nine months in Galilee. This passage highlights to us Jesus' claims as to who he was and as to what he was doing. The disciples and multitudes who heard him were joyful and followed him while the Pharisees or the religious authorities were jealous of him and questioned his authority because their claims of God were very much different from the claims of Jesus. As we journey with Jesus closely this season of Lent, let us look at his claims again and experience him afresh in our lives today.

#### 1. THE VEHEMENT CLAIMS OF JESUS

Jesus claimed to be the Promised Messiah. He asserted his lordship over the Sabbath, and his oneness and perfect union with the Father. He also highlighted his life-giving power and his appointment as a Judge. The mind of Jesus was also the mind of God, the Words of Jesus were the Words of God, and the actions of Jesus were the actions of God.

#### 2. THE VALIDITY OF THE CLAIMS OF JESUS

Were these claims true? Is it true to you today? What would have been your reaction if you had lived in Jerusalem in AD 30 and had heard Jesus' claim personally? How would you have responded? Today we have the evidence for us in the Scriptures. Friends, age after age, the simple and eternal truths of these claims have been demonstrated and validated to us today. They were verified by the witness of John the Baptist (John 5:33), by the witness of the Heavenly Father (John 5:37), by the witness of his miraculous work (John 5:36) and by the teachings of the Old Testament concerning Jesus (John 5:39). The evidence of his crucifixion for our redemption, sacrificial death on the cross, resurrection and ascension were all witnessed and are recorded for us.

#### 3. THE VERDICT TO THE CLAIMS OF JESUS

People had made their own conclusions and responded differently to the claims of Jesus at that time. Some responded with indifference and were unconcerned while some others were doubtful and were filled with unbelief. The religious leaders were jealous of Jesus and were filled with hatred, pride, selfishness, and prejudice and were plotting to kill Jesus. On the other hand, some others believed in the claims of Jesus, received him as their Messiah by faith and followed him loyally even to die the death of a martyr.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Friends, as we observe Lent this year 2024, with all the evidence in the Holy Bible that is in our hands and that which we have been reading and meditating daily, how are we responding to the claims Jesus made then, in our lives today? Who is Jesus really to us today? What does it mean for us today? How have we experienced him personally in our lives?

What are we doing with the knowledge that we have acquired and the experiences that we have had of Jesus in our individual lives today? His claims are true. May we be blessed experiencing Jesus in a very special way this season of Lent. Jesus invites us to be loyal to him and in return honour the Father who had sent him.

## ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

Who is Jesus to you and how are you relating and sharing your personal experiences of Jesus and his claims with the people around you this season of Lent?

## ***FOR INTERCESSION***

Open our eyes O God, that we may see you as you have revealed yourself to us, Open our ears so that we may hear as you speak to us, and open our hearts and minds to understand you and to receive you afresh today. Amen

**Venerable John Kennady Samuel**  
**Archdeacon of Lower North (Perak) Archdeaconry**  
**Vicar of St. John's Church, Ipoh**

*You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life.  
These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ...  
John 5:39*

### THE 4 WITNESSES TO JESUS

The 1MDB scandal is notoriously renowned as perhaps the biggest scandal in history. As of the end of 2023, 48 witnesses have been summoned by the prosecution team and there might be more. The gospel passage from John 5:30ff points out that Jesus only provided 4 witnesses for authentication of his ministry. For Jesus, this is more than enough (cf. Deuteronomy 19:15). The four witnesses:

#### i. The Witness of God the Father (vs 31-32,37-38)

In defending himself against his opponents, Jesus touched on the witness of God his Father, John the Baptist his cousin, his own works and of the Holy Scriptures. The first witness is God the Father. Jesus has the full assurance of the testimony of the Father. He is absolutely confident of the word from the Father. For Jesus, this is the primary witness but Jesus knows that unless there's accreditation from some human sources, it is most likely not enough to carry weight. At the same time, from a historical perspective, it was clear that the people had difficulties in believing the Father. This was manifested in the following:

- a. God the Father has spoken to Moses (Exodus 33:11), but the people had not heard nor obeyed his voice.
- b. Though God had wrestled with Jacob (Israel) in physical form (Genesis 32:30, 31), the people had not seen his form.
- c. Though the Father's word dwells in Joshua (Joshua 1:8, 9) and the Psalmist (Psalm 119:11) and had been "eaten" by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:1), it does not dwell in them.

As such, their disbelief in the One whom the Father has sent is rooted in the people's prior disbelief in the Father who had been witnessing to them throughout their history. This traditional framework of rejecting the evidence that the Father had given them therefore stands in the way of accepting Jesus' pointing to the Father as his witness.

Given this "traditional rejection," Jesus proceeds to present 3 more witnesses whom and which the Father has ordained - John the Baptist, Jesus' own works and the Scriptures.

#### ii. The Witness of John the Baptist (vs 33-35)

John's witness through his charismatic lifestyle and "powerful" ministry attracted crowds to follow him. He was the forerunner pointing everyone to the coming Messiah. Many seemed to be following him and accepting his teachings. Critically speaking, many got caught up with the air of excitement and attraction but it was all short-lived. On the whole, people did not take John seriously. The people failed to see beyond John himself. They followed him only for a time (John 5:35 - Note the use of the word "for a while" in this verse).

iii. The Witness of Jesus' Works (v 36)

The works specified in this passage include the miraculous signs. The miracle of healing the man at the pool was actually the focus of the encounter here between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. All these are signs of the Father working in and through Jesus. Even then the people did not believe the One the Father sent! (v 38)

iv. The Witness of the Scriptures (vs 39-40)

The Scriptures bear a tremendous volume of inspiration and the devotion of the Jews. But they still have missed the true content and purpose of the Scriptures. They bear witness to Jesus (5:39) It is not that the name of Jesus appears on every page of the Old Testament but that he is there as prophet, priest and king. If only they could discern it.

Yet they rejected Jesus because in their hearts they have no real love for God (vs 41-42) and they prefer the limelight of human glory (vs 43-44). More importantly, they misinterpret the Scriptures, like some Christians do today.

The opposition to and rejection of Jesus are played very much in those similar grounds today. It challenges us today to rise up as witnesses bearing testimony to Jesus the only Son of God.

*FURTHER REFLECTION*

In our multi-religious context, does Jesus' dialogue with the people have any implications for us today?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Pray for those who are involved in frontline evangelism and those who are ministering in difficult anti-Christian settings.

**Right Reverend Dr Jason Selvaraj**  
**Suffragan Bishop of the Southern Region of The Diocese of West Malaysia**  
**Vicar of The Pro Cathedral of Christ Church, Melaka**

*Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.*

*John 6:11*

### ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Today's reflection is based on the feeding of the 5,000 as recounted by the apostle John. This passage shares a parallel with Exodus 16 where Moses leads the Israelites into the wilderness and where God provided the Israelites with manna, a bread-like substance to sustain them in their travels. As a large crowd approached Jesus, he posed a question to Philip: "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" John records that Jesus, already knowing what he was going to do, was testing Philip to see whom or what he would rely upon in the midst of scarcity, just as the Israelites were tested to trust God to provide for them. Like the Israelites who failed to trust God, Philip immediately assessed that it would take more than half a year's wages to feed the crowd. Philip here echoes our natural human tendencies to rely on our own human knowledge when faced with scarcity.

When I was first made redundant from a job a few years ago, I found myself mirroring Philip's response by turning to my own understanding of how to manage through joblessness and to support my young family with outcomes that were varied and, at times, challenging. Philip's reaction highlights how insufficient resources and our limited human capability can hamper our ability to meet needs if that is what we only rely upon. Jesus, however, teaches us to have faith in him even in the face of scarcity.

Upon discovering a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, the disciples questioned Jesus once more, expressing doubt about the adequacy of such meagre provisions. At this moment, similar to the Israelites who forgot that it was God who brought the ten plagues upon Egypt and saved them from Pharaoh, the disciples seemed to forget the miracles Jesus had performed before this event. However, Jesus demonstrated the proper response to such adversity—gratitude. After giving thanks, Jesus distributed the loaves and fish to the crowd and miraculously, there was more than enough for everyone. This serves as a poignant reminder for us to cultivate an attitude of gratitude in the face of challenges. Whether it is material blessings, relationships, or spiritual growth, recognizing and appreciating what we have fosters contentment and echoes the abundance found in Jesus' compassionate acts.

Jesus has the remarkable ability to multiply the little we possess into an abundance that exceeds our expectations, a truth I have personally experienced in my own life. As I leaned more on God's divine providence and grace, a profound peace enveloped me, reassuring me of God's constant presence through every adversity faced by my family. In due course, I secured a new job, and as I reflect, the outcome far surpasses what I initially anticipated. This journey has taught me the importance of not solely relying on my own understanding

during challenging times, but rather entrusting the path ahead to the abundance that comes from having faith in Jesus.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

The disciples played a role in distributing the food to the crowd. Therefore, we are also called similarly by God to be vessels of his grace and providence. Let us be mindful to share with others what we ourselves have been given. Just as God blesses us, we too must extend our hands with kindness, love, and resources to those in need.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Lord Jesus, thank you for your abundant provision in our lives each day. Help us to trust in you, especially when faced with scarcity. Teach us to be grateful for the blessings we receive and empower us to share your abundance with others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Mr. Emmanuel Jebaraj Rajakumar**  
**Holy Trinity Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur**

*When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, 'It is I; don't be afraid.'*

*John 6:19-20*

## STORMS IN LIFE

John 6:16-21 tells us about Jesus walking on the water and calming the strong wind. Just before this incident, Jesus spoke to a crowd of 5000 people and he fed them with five loaves and two fish. John states that the people were saying that Jesus was the Prophet and were probably going to make him king by force. Therefore, Jesus quickly sent the disciples off to their boat and withdrew to the mountain by himself to pray.

While the disciples were on the boat there was a strong wind, the waters grew rough. The disciples were frightened. Suddenly they saw Jesus approaching them, walking on water. They were terrified probably because they did not recognize him. They thought Jesus was a ghost (Mark 6:49). When Jesus identified himself and got into the boat with them, the wind died down and they arrived safely across the lake to Capernaum.

What do we see here in this narrative? First, we see that Jesus withdrew from the crowd and went to pray by himself. Jesus shows us the importance of spending time alone with God as much as we can. There are many instances in the Gospels that tell us Jesus went by himself to pray. Many of us have family prayers daily and that is great. But let us not forget to spend time alone with God too.

Next, we see that the storm died down as Jesus got into the boat. This incident opened the eyes of the disciples that Jesus is God. The wind and the rough waters can be seen as a symbol of the “storms” that surround us. We as Christians need to have Jesus in our boat during “storms” in our lives and believe that he will “calm the storm”.

For us to believe that Jesus will always be with us during the storms in our lives, we need to have a close relationship with him. How do we do that? First, spend time alone with God as often as we can. Next, read the Bible daily and allow God to speak to us through his Word. Communication is a two-way process. While we speak to God in our prayers, it is important that we hear God speak to us. God speaks to us through the Scripture. Third, participate in corporate worship every week. The Christians in Acts did that. It is important to come together for worship and to have fellowship with God's people; to encourage and be encouraged as well as to learn from one another. Fourth, give some of our precious time to serve him. It does not have to be something great. Just being around to help in arranging chairs for a Bible study and putting chairs away, visiting the sick and praying for someone, is serving God. The church needs helpers to survive and grow, and it all starts with us.



### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

To be a Christian does not mean we will be free of problems and suffering (storms). Jesus suffered. So did his disciples and so many others who stood firm in their faith. It is only by having a relationship with our God, that we will have the peace that passes all understanding in our hearts, amid all trials and tribulations.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Father in heaven, holy be your Name. I thank you for the assurance of your love and peace in my life. Help me to do all that I should to please you and worship you. Teach me your ways O God that I may always look to you amid “storms” in my life and never waver in my faith and trust in you. Amen.

**Ms. Anne Swinitha Rajaratnam**  
**The Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia**

*Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'*

*John 6:35*

### FEEDING ON THE LIVING BREAD

After the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, the crowds had spent a whole night and day searching for Jesus on the other side of Lake Galilee. Now they found him and asked for more food. Jesus tells them to work hard for food for the soul, not food for the stomach. Working to support ourselves and our families is important, but Jesus tells us that feeding our souls with spiritual food must take top priority. Working to satisfy ourselves materially must not be an obsession.

They ask Jesus what they should do to do the works of God. Jesus asks them to believe in him. What does he mean? Any amount of good work is no substitute for faith. Believing in Jesus is the same as coming to Jesus. And coming to Jesus means to be in a relationship where our souls feed on him daily. Jesus goes on to say, "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." Jesus uses eating and drinking of him as spiritual metaphors for this intimate relationship. When Jesus says, "I am the bread of life", this is one of the seven great "I am" statements of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel. Each time Jesus says "I am" it is for us. His very nature shows us the depth of God's grace. Jesus himself is a 100% outpouring of himself for a fallen mankind. Jesus invites us to come to him. This is why believing in Jesus is more than a mental exercise, it is entering a relationship with a holy God.

The invitation to come to Jesus is to everybody. We try and fail to find meaning or fulfilment apart from Jesus. Just as our bodies need food to keep us alive physically, so our souls need the spiritual food that God offers us to keep alive spiritually. The bread of life is offered to us and the only way to that new relationship with God is by coming to Jesus. In practical terms, we feed on Jesus when we learn of him in Scripture, when we pray, when we walk in obedience to what he asks, when we ask for forgiveness, when we thank him for his blessings, when we worship him. We can feed on this bread daily. Jesus goes on to say later in the dialogue that this restoration of our relationship with God is through his body and blood given for us at Calvary. God satisfies the hunger of the human soul.

The hand of God is the driving force behind our coming to Christ. At the end of this passage, Jesus says that those whom the Father has given him will come to him. Although the sparks and flames of our faith may seem feeble, Jesus promises that no one can pluck from his hand the one who comes to him in faith. The salvation of the believer is God's work and we can rest secure in his grace.

We can rejoice that Jesus daily asks us to come to him and feast in a relationship of faith. The hunger of our soul is ended, the unsettled soul is at rest.

*FURTHER REFLECTION*

John 7:37-38: 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.'. But this he spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in him would receive.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father we rejoice in the inexpressible gift of your Son. Jesus, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore!

**Mr. Martin Rushworth**  
**All Souls International Community Church, Desa Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur**

*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.  
John 6:54*

### THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

This passage is about Jesus, who is the True Bread that came from heaven to give life to everyone. Certain people, called the elect, will believe in Jesus and stick with him. If we believe in Jesus and stick with him until the end, we will be raised up by him and saved forever. "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." (John 6:37).

The sign of the cross reminds us of Jesus' death, which was a punishment for our sins. Because of his death, we can have eternal life if we trust and believe in him with all our hearts. Just saying we believe isn't enough, we have to really believe in Jesus deep down inside us.

In the second segment of his discourse on the Bread of Life, Jesus explains this. That bread represents the flesh and the blood of Jesus. We cannot have life until we eat his flesh and drink his blood. We remain outside of Christ unless we believe to the extent of accompanying him through his death and suffering. Receiving Holy Communion serves as an example of this kind of faith. We eat and drink of his flesh and blood internally and spiritually when we partake in the Lord's Supper. If not, we would still not have eternal life. Our status as nominal Christians remains unsaved and it is comparable to the Jews who fought one another, asking, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (v 52) and like the Jews who heard Jesus in the Synagogue of Capernaum and retorted, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (v 60). However, their unbelief and our unbelief do not surprise our Lord. "For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him." (v 64).

John 6:41-59 presents Jesus as the ultimate source of life, surpassing earthly sustenance with the promise of eternity. He demands faith and challenges worldly understanding, offering a profound union with God through acceptance of his sacrifice. This powerful passage leaves us with a choice: cling to the fleeting or embrace the Bread of Life and claim the promise of everlasting existence.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Union with God: Jesus describes a reciprocal relationship with those who partake of his bread of life. He promises to dwell within them, and they will dwell in him, creating a profound spiritual unity.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, open my eyes to see beyond the crumbs of this world. Draw me to Jesus, the true Bread of Life, who satisfies my deepest hunger. Grant me faith to eat of his flesh and drink his blood in spirit. Let your life flow through me, quenching my thirst for meaning and purpose. Fill me with your unending love, that I may live not just for today, but for eternity. In Jesus' most powerful name, I pray. Amen.

**Reverend Paul Khoo Boo Huat**  
**Priest in Charge of Emmanuel Harvest Centre, Penang**

*Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.'*  
*John 6:68-69*

### THE QUALITY OF OUR FAITH

Most of us now “follow” or “join” groups on social media platforms that are of interest to us. When we tire of it or if the group does not meet our expectations, we just leave the group.

In the same way, Jesus attracted many followers because of his miracles, healings and teachings. Some of them followed him because they saw him healing the sick (John 6:2). Others followed him because they were miraculously fed (John 6:10-13) and wanted him to provide food for them (John 6:34). Many thought he had come to overthrow their political masters (John 6:14-15). Some truly believed that he was the promised Messiah, the Son of God (v 69).

However, Jesus’ teaching about who he is, his purpose on earth and his relationship with God caused many of his disciples to turn away from him (v 66). Some of their reasons for leaving the group were because:

1. they could not accept Jesus’ teaching as they wanted something easy to understand and follow,
2. they found Jesus’ teachings offensive:
  - eating and drinking his flesh and blood (John 6:51)
  - his teaching about the Son of Man ascending to where he was before (v 62) and be with them physically to fight their battles for them.
  - their discipleship is enabled by God the Father and not through their own choice or capabilities (v 65)
3. they expected Jesus to be a political leader (John 6:15).

We can categorise the disciples based on the quality of their faith:

1. The disciples who turned back – their faith was earth-bound based on Jesus’ ability to provide for them (food, healing). Jesus’ teaching on spiritual matters was beyond their understanding as their focus was on their earthly needs. Jesus tells them to look beyond earthly concerns to spiritual matters as “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing” (v 63).
2. Judas who betrayed Jesus - followed Jesus for his own gains. When Jesus’ teachings did not fit in with his expectations, he tried to “fix” it based on his own understanding. But Jesus outrightly tells his disciples that he knows some of them do not believe him and will betray him (v 64) allowing them to check their motives for following him.
3. The disciples who were faithful to Jesus – they trusted Jesus although they did not understand his teachings. They failed as disciples, ran away when Jesus was arrested

(Mark 14:50) and Simon Peter denied knowing him three times (John 18:17, 25, 27). But they repented, returned to Jesus, continued witnessing for him, and endured persecution and gory deaths.

Which of the above categories do we fall into?

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Let us ponder on the quality of our faith. Are we like the disciples who turned away? Do we grumble when trials and challenges in life come our way? Or are we like Judas taking things into our own hands to work things out for our own benefit? Or are we like Peter who declares, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”, and cling on to Jesus till he calls us home?

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Pray that God will help us strengthen and deepen our faith and help us to have a close relationship with him - a relationship whereby we always run to him when we are assailed by life’s challenges because only he has the “words of life”.

**Daphne Rosaline Henry Thomas**  
**Pro Cathedral of Christ Church, Melaka**

*Therefore Jesus told them, 'My time is not yet here ...'  
John 7:6*

## TRUSTING GOD'S TIMING

As we open our hearts to this passage, let us consider the universal struggle of waiting for God's timing in the midst of pressure, the challenges of being misunderstood even by those close to us, and the call to obedience even when it seems counterintuitive.

John 7:1-9 offers us profound insights into the character of Christ and invites us to reflect on our own journey of faith.

### **Timing in God's Plan:**

Jesus mentions, "My time is not yet here." It's a reminder that God's timing is crucial. Often, we may feel pressured to conform to the expectations of others or to meet societal timelines, but Jesus teaches us the importance of waiting on God's perfect timing. Patience and trust in God's plan are essential virtues.

### **Misunderstanding and Unbelief:**

Even Jesus' brothers, who grew up with him, did not fully believe in him. It reflects the reality that not everyone around us will understand or accept our journey of faith. In times of doubt or scepticism from others, we can find solace in knowing that Jesus himself experienced such challenges.

### **The World's Reaction to Truth:**

Jesus acknowledges that the world hates him because he testifies that its works are evil. As followers of Christ, we may encounter resistance or opposition when we stand up for truth and righteousness. The world's values may often clash with the values of the Kingdom of God.

### **Obedience to God's Will:**

Jesus, despite his brothers' advice, chooses to go to the festival in God's time and in God's way. This underscores the importance of obedience to God's will over human counsel. It encourages us to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit and align our actions with God's purpose, even if it may seem contrary to human wisdom.

### **Jesus in Secret:**

The passage concludes with Jesus going to the festival in secret. This reflects the humility and intentionality of Jesus. He didn't seek glory or public attention for himself. It is a reminder to examine our own motives and ensure that our actions are driven by a sincere desire to glorify God rather than to seek approval or recognition from others.



### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

In summary, John 7:1-9 invites us to reflect on the themes of patience, trust in God's timing, facing misunderstanding and opposition, obedience to God's will, and humility in our journey of faith.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

As we reflect on John 7:1-9, we thank you for the lessons embedded in this passage. Grant us patience in divine timing, the courage to withstand misunderstanding, and the wisdom to obediently follow your will. May our actions reflect a humble desire to glorify you and to seek your approval above all else. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Venerable Stephen Chan**  
**Archdeacon of the Middle Central Archdeaconry**  
**Vicar of St. Katherine's Church, Kajang, Selangor**

*...why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body ...?*

*John 7:23b*

### JUDGE WITH RIGHT JUDGMENT

Today, we reflect on the Jews' perception of Jesus at the Feast of Booths in Judea. They were divided. Some saw him in a favourable light, calling him a good man. Others went as far as to denounce him as a leader who was leading God's people astray (v 12). The view of the latter is worth considering alongside two verses that mention the intent of the Jewish authorities to kill him (John 7:1, 19).

How was Jesus perceived to be leading people astray? In an earlier narrative, Jesus had healed an invalid on the Sabbath and went on to explain this act to the effect that he was equal to God (John 5:16-18). For the Jewish authorities, this was a blatant case of lawbreaking and blasphemy (John 5:18). However, Jesus didn't come to lead God's people astray. He was not a lawbreaker or a blasphemer. He was drawing the Jews to himself as the One who demonstrated the overarching principles of God's law.

At the Feast of Booths, Jesus was publicly teaching in the temple and it garnered an astonished reaction from the crowd, questioning the veracity of his learning (vs 14-24). Here, Jesus guided the probing crowd to discern the state of their hearts: Were they truly committed to God's will (v 17)? If the answer was "yes", Jesus affirmed that they would know the forthrightness of his commissioning and teaching (vs 16-18).

In response to the murderous intent of the Jewish authorities, Jesus confronted their inability to grasp the underlying purpose of the Sabbath, that is to honour God. He rebuked their legalism that allowed for circumcision on the Sabbath but not the wholesome restoration of a man's body. After all, did not both acts of work bear witness to God's righteousness and mercy?

Here, the righteous Son of God had come to save the lost sheep of Israel. In their arrogant ignorance, the Jewish authorities denounced him in favour of superficial standards. They were obsessed with the legalistic upholding of their interpretation of the law at the expense of committing to its overarching principles of righteousness and mercy. Jesus urged them to address this costly oversight: Judge with right judgment.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

God calls his children to follow in the righteousness and mercy of Jesus, his Son. In all our undertakings, we are to be led by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Scriptures and not by legalism and reasonings of the flesh.

Let us confess any practice that needs to be realigned to his righteousness and mercy (relationships/ministries/public witness).

In worship, surrender to the Lord's nurturing work in your life by his Holy Spirit.

Seek out brothers and sisters in Christ who can encourage you towards a yielded life of righteousness and mercy.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Righteous and merciful Father, I pray for your Holy Spirit to nurture me in the way of Christ's love for the communities you have placed me in. Let it overflow in abundance to the glory of your name. Amen.

**Reverend Paul Lau**  
**St. Paul's Theological College, Kuala Lumpur**  
**All Saints' Anglican Church, Kuala Lumpur**

*Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, 'Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him.'*  
*John 7:28*

### DISCERNING TRUTH IN A WORLD OF DOUBTS

As we read through John 7:25-36, we feel as though we have walked into the crowded streets of Jerusalem, hearing different voices expressing doubts, uncertainty, and scepticism about Jesus. The people, influenced by diverse hearsay, questioned his origin. The Pharisees, rooted in their sense of religious duties, questioned his legitimacy. Even the temple guards, sent to arrest him, were captivated by his words (v 46). It was a blend of different noises, leaving many confused.

Too many voices can become noise—this is also true of our lives today. Often, we are bombarded with the voices of society, culture, and personal experiences that influence our view of who Jesus is. Especially in a post-modern worldview where truth is relative—your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth—it can all be very subjective. Is Jesus just a creation of his followers' imagination? Is he merely a prophet and not divine? Or is he one of many who can lead us to God? How do we discern the truth, and where can we find secure grounding?

In verse 28, Jesus cried out while teaching in the temple. The term "cried out" literally meant that he yelled at the top of his voice. Amidst all the noise, this was the one thing he wanted the people to hear—that he comes from God and is truly sent by God. The people assumed they knew him and his origin—Nazareth of Galilee (or so they thought). In actuality, they did not. Jesus emphasized that he came from heaven, from God the Father. He insisted that he had not come on his initiative but at the will of the Father who sent him (NET Note). He further clarified that God the Father who sent him is true (alethinos)—he is real, he is the truth, and he is the ultimate reality!

In that same utterance, Jesus was telling the people, "You do not know the God you worship." Could the same be said of us today in our search for the "truth"? T.D. Alexander said, "Truth, in all aspects, began and ended with God. For this reason, the pursuit of 'truth' will bring one closer to God." As we search for the truth today, may we be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance in our minds, hearts, and experiences. Amid confusing noises, may we still hear that one voice that stands out—the voice of Jesus, leading us back to himself and the Father.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

What is a current doubt or question you have about Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you today a truth concerning Jesus. Pray that this truth resounds loudly in your heart and mind this Lent, drowning out the other noises around you.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Dear Father, thank you for reminding me that you are the truth and that I can know you through knowing Jesus. Reveal more of yourself to me and grant me better discernment as I get to know you more. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

**Charlotte Ng Jia Lerd**  
**St. Paul's Theological College, Kuala Lumpur**

*On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.'*

*John 7:37*

### COME TO JESUS AND DRINK

In this passage, we find Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles, also called the Festival of Booth-making, is one of the most sacred of Jewish festivals. In the eight days of the feast, the Jews celebrate by tying together three types of branches (usually palms, willow, myrtle), and one type of fruit (yellow citron) and waving them in a special ceremony on each day of the celebration as they commemorate the forty-year sojourn of the Israelites in the desert. During this time, the Jews also build and live in temporary dwellings known as the tabernacle (*sukkot* in Hebrew; *skēnē* in Greek) which reminds them of the faithfulness of God in the desert and how he provided them with food, water, and shelter.

More importantly, these tabernacles reminded them of *the tabernacle* in Exodus where God's very presence dwelt. It was a powerful reminder of how God watched over their fore-fathers, day and night in the desert, and they looked forward to the day where God will dwell with them once again. But little did the Jews know as they celebrated the Feast, that God was already in their midst. In the prologue of the Gospel, John presents Jesus as the Word who became flesh and 'tabernacled' (*skēnoō*) with humanity (John 1:14). Even though the Jews did not realise at that time, something amazing had already taken place before their very eyes: the God who dwelt in the tabernacle in the desert had come down in person and was walking and talking with them!

On the last day of the Feast, Jesus stood up among the people and said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." This is significant because the Feast of Tabernacles concludes with a water drawing ceremony where the priest will draw water from the pool of Siloam and carry it to the temple and pour it into a silver basin beside the altar and pray for the Lord to provide rain to replenish their water supply.

The ceremony, which is based on prophetic passages like Isaiah 12, speaks of the day when Israel will "draw water from the wells of salvation". The theme of water and life is found throughout John's Gospel, and in chapter 4, Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the water that he gives will be "a spring of water welling up to eternal life". Here in this passage his invitation extended to all at the Feast: Come drink from me!

Jesus continued saying, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Not only will those who believe in Jesus receive life-giving water, they themselves will become a conduit and channel of God's life to others. This is because the living water that Jesus spoke of was the Holy Spirit who is received by everyone who believes in him.

Today, whether our hearts are glad or troubled, there is still the invitation to come to Jesus and to drink from him. Jesus invites us to believe in the Father and in him, and to entrust our future to him. Whatever our ‘thirst’ may be today, Jesus wants to give us that living water: the Spirit and his very presence to dwell and ‘tabernacle’ in us, and he wants to bring that life and blessing to others through us. And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and with all whom we love, and remain with us now and always.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Jesus still invites us to come to him today. What are some ways that we can make space during our day to hear the Lord’s gentle call? It may be a moment in commute, at school or at work, or perhaps even during a feast with friends and family. Take a moment to respond to Jesus and to receive afresh his life-giving Spirit.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

The promise of Jesus is that everyone who believes in him will receive the Spirit and out of our hearts “will flow rivers of living water”. Let us pray that the Lord will open our hearts this week to the needs of our colleagues, friends, and family. How can we bring the life of God to them in prayer and in practical ways?

**Mr. Simon Kang**  
**St. Paul’s Theological College, Kuala Lumpur**

*At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.*

*John 8:9*

### DRIFTING AWAY OR LINGERING TO LISTEN

In the season of Lent, we find ourselves longing for transformation, for deep encounters with Jesus and his grace. In this story, we see the Pharisees tragically miss an opportunity for that. They come to him with guns blazing, eager to hear his consent for them to stone this woman, or perhaps to hear him argue for her pardon in a way that would show him to be compromising the law. She is a pawn they use to incriminate Jesus. Jesus diffuses the situation with his enigmatic act of writing in the sand. While scholars have debated what exactly he wrote, with theories ranging from the words of the law to each of their names, we simply cannot know. What seems more important is that his creative action and studied silence seem to have made a space for their hot-headed vindictiveness to subside. Jesus then proceeds to lay down a challenge—they can stone her, with the one without sin tossing the first stone. We breathe a sigh of relief as they put down their weapons in response to the brilliant leadership of Jesus.

But as the scene ends, they have walked away, falling short of a transformative encounter with Jesus. They leave silently and, it seems, from their future encounters with him, sullenly. They are hardened in their determination to oppose him. They turn *from* sin, at least from its worst manifestation at this moment, but they do not turn *towards* Jesus. The woman leaves as well, but not before engaging with Jesus—responding to his question and then receiving his words of grace and challenge, and his invitation to live life differently.

Lent is a season for mourning and turning from our sins, which is good. But sometimes we can let it devolve into merely making the turn away from wrongdoing, trimming excesses from our lives in a pseudo-sacred self-improvement quest. We set aside sin but remain distant from our Savior. What a different scene this would have been if the Pharisees had said, “Teach us your gracious ways, Jesus! We have strayed so far. We want to learn from you how to lead as servants, how to speak truth with love, and how to read the law through the lens of grace.” Instead, the text says, “They began to drift away one by one.” They admit defeat, and to their credit, they turn from harming the woman. But they drift away, leaving only the woman lingering in Jesus’ presence. By lingering, she positions herself to hear the word of mercy and hope that Jesus has for her. May we do the same.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

When I am convicted of sin, do I justify and rationalize it? Do I turn from surface-level actions but avoid lingering in the presence of Jesus, allowing him to do the deeper surgery



that may be needed? How am I tempted to “drift away” like the Pharisees did here, content to manage sin without waiting to hear Jesus’ words to me? What is the deep transformation that I long for in this Lenten season?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Lord Jesus, we pray for ourselves and for your church in Malaysia to be eager to linger in your presence long enough to hear your words to us. We need you to transform us. Give us wisdom and grace to lead and love as Jesus did. Amen.

**Lisa Lamb**  
**St. Paul’s Theological College, Kuala Lumpur**

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

*John 8:12*

### THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*The creature is darkness insofar as it comes out of nothing. But in as much as it has its origin from God, it participates in his image; and this leads to likeness to him.*

St. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* q. 18, a. 2, ad 5

In this sacred season of Lent as we begin afresh to turn our gaze toward Christ's journey to the cross, we find his opening words here particularly poignant. In John 8:12-30 we are met with the second of Jesus' "I am" statements – "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Walking in darkness is of course a metaphor; during the night one is more likely to fall over or stumble given that we cannot see where we are going, but Jesus is not talking about literal darkness. Rather he is alluding to darkness as a depiction of humanity living in sin.

No duality is more stark, more obvious than that between light and darkness. Perhaps we have felt this during the Lenten season, where our time is spent introspecting, meditating and preparing for Easter; we reflect on the darkness both inside and around us and on the wonderful Light that shines into it.

The encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees illustrates the challenge when human intellectual pride is confronted by the boundless wisdom of the Word made flesh. Lent calls us to humble ourselves before the mystery of the Incarnation. To walk in his light requires a certain vulnerability, an acknowledgment of our need for redemption. It necessitates a recognition that, without the divine light, we are destined to stumble in the darkness of our own making.

In verse 28, our Christ speaks enigmatically, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he." Let us take seriously the call to lift up the Son of Man in our own hearts and to exalt him above all else. In the act of surrendering our burdens and sins to the cross, may we come to intimately know the true nature of the One who declares himself as the Light of Life and be transformed more and more into a likeness of him.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

As we journey through the Lenten season, let us do so with hearts open to the transformative power of Christ's light. Let us relinquish the shadows that bind us and lift up the Son of Man

in our lives. May the radiance of his presence guide us through the wilderness of Lent and lead us to the glorious dawn of Easter.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

We pray for this world, of which so much is still walking in darkness. Have mercy on us Son of God, and reveal your light to those who are yet to know you.

**Mr. Jonathan Chan**  
**St. Paul's Theological College, Kuala Lumpur**

*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

*John 8:36*

### ABIDE

Yesterday we read that having overheard the lively back-and-forth between Jesus and the religious teachers, “*many believed in him*” (John 8:30). It might surprise us to realise, then, that what Jesus says today is directed, not at the Pharisees, but at those he has just won over! In full flow he may be, but is it sensible of Jesus to pick a fight with the new recruits?

Two uncomfortable but freeing truths confront both them and us in today’s reading.

The first is that sin enslaves (v 34). The crowd protests against Jesus: how can you free us, when we’ve never been slaves? It is a strange reply. After all, in Egypt and in exile, the Jewish people had been slaves and subjects of foreign empires. But the rabbis had taught them that no matter their outward status, all “*sons of Abraham*” remain always the “*freed men*” of God (R. Akiva). Jesus responds by disclosing their true, inner slavery. This is Christ’s pattern. He patiently reveals the sin that enslaves us – sometimes things we have seldom been aware of before. And he does so always as a prelude to inviting us to live as who we are in him: not slaves, but free sons and daughters (vs 35–36). The attentiveness and repentance of the season of Lent has everything to do with this promise.

The second truth is that freedom takes time. Jesus calls those who have believed to become his disciples, promising: “*continue in my Word ... and the truth will make you free*” (v 31). One simple definition that we might take from his teaching here is that discipleship is *belief, plus time*. We *continue* when, day after day, we pray, open the scriptures and respond to his call on the whole of our lives, trusting that “*in and out of season*” (2 Timothy 4), remaining in him will both bring growth and bear fruit. In other words, Jesus is saying here, “*keep at it*”. Or as one early Christian monk once told some young disciples in his care: “*Stay in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything*” (Abba Moses). But the word Jesus uses for *continue* is in fact also the word also often translated as *abide* – as when Jesus says in John 15, “*I am the true vine ... abide in me as I abide in you.*” *Abide* conjures an image of being at home and at rest. *Continue*, by contrast, smacks of perseverance and effort. In Christ, these come together in a new way: as we press on, we wait patiently with him and for him as he comes to set us free. Our call is to *continue* in him, as he *continues* in us.

Jesus is indeed the Son of the Father; the one who grants us to share his “*permanent place in the household of God*” (v 35). His invitation to us here is to daily learn to live as the free inhabitants of the home where we have already taken up residence, learning its ways and customs, while throwing off the habits and trappings of the old.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Do we, like Jesus' audience in today's reading, ever become defensive when Jesus puts a finger on the sin in our lives? How can we reframe that conviction this Lent as the prelude to forgiveness and transformation?

Can you think of a particular season of waiting where perseverance in simple daily habits of prayer was key in sustaining strength and hope?

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Father, true freedom is found in your Son. Thank you for drawing us back to you through his saving death and resurrection, and thank you that we abide this day in Christ's life. Bring life to my daily spiritual discipline. Through it, may I live with you and be transformed.

**Reverend Mark Knight  
St. Paul's Theological College, Kuala Lumpur  
Holy Trinity, Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur**

*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

*John 8:44*

## TRUTH HURTS

Jesus is dealing with the so-called religious leaders of the day. They were not just ordinary citizens, but those who were well versed in the Scriptures – Pharisees & Scribes! They knew the Abrahamic faith on the tips of their fingers, but they were blinded to the truth that God was revealing through Jesus Christ. They claimed that Abraham was their father, yet they were not able to live as Abraham did (v 39). They were literally blinded by the traditions and teachings which had come along the way. Paul in writing to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “whose minds the god of this age has blinded.....”.

As I sat and reflected on this passage, verse 44 especially struck me, “You are of your father the devil and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is liar and the father of it”.

Wow, if a pastor or a preacher says this to his congregation or to any person, he is dead meat! But that is what exactly Jesus said to his listeners. A wise man once said, “Truth always hurts”. The words of Jesus actually pricked the hearts of every one of them.

Beloved in Christ, when a person truly welcomes Jesus into their hearts, they will be prepared to be rebuked and corrected even though it will hurt their feelings and inner being. Jesus says in Revelation 3:19, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent”. As God's children, even though it may hurt our feelings, we must be prepared to listen and be freed by the truth, for it will set us free (v 32). There are many still in their shells, all because they are not prepared to free themselves from being blind to the truth.

The devil will do all that he can to keep you under his arms, closing your ears, eyes and inner feelings, so that you will not be free. He wants you inside a cage, not free! In today's Christian world, there are too many leaders and members, who are prepared to compromise their faith in Christ to please a few. The devil has literally blinded them. They are prepared to take up arms and fight for their rights, not realizing their rights will destroy the Church as a whole. We see that happening around us and in the world.

Beloved, if we belong to Christ, we will be prepared to submit to Christ wholly and surrender our thoughts and will to him. We will start to bear the fruits of the Spirit as recorded in Galatians 5:22–23. As we walk through the season of Lent, let us ask ourselves this question, “Do I belong to Christ and set free by him, or am I still blinded by the forces of the world,

led by the devil?” Remember, Satan is a liar from the beginning. He lied to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), and he has been doing that throughout the ages. Do not fall into his trap. Do not let him draw you away from Jesus, who came seeking for you, died for you, defeated Satan by rising again from the dead and assured you eternal life. Warren W. Wiersbe says, “If God is not your Father, then hell is your destiny”. Beloved, let us not be deceived by the devil, even though the truth hurts, draw close to God and stay close to him. He will set you free.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Jesus spoke about the devil’s objectives in John 10. It is good to read and meditate on Jesus being our Good Shepherd and the devil as the one who came to rob, kill and destroy.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for setting me free from the lies of the devil and assuring me of your presence daily in my life. Help me to walk in your steps daily, to please and live for you all day long. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

**Venerable Jacob George John**  
**Archdeacon of the Eastern Archdeaconry**  
**All Souls’ Church, Cameron Highlands**

*Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.*

*John 8:51*

## WHO IS JESUS?

Have you ever been a bad person in someone else's story? This happened to Jesus countless times. In today's reading, the Jews accused Jesus and invented the situation to make Jesus look bad.

In John 8:42-47, we find that Jesus identified himself with the Father, but for the Jews, he called them the true children of the devil. Why did Jesus want to call them that? It was because the Jews who claimed to belong to Abraham's descendants were very unlike Abraham and they were enslaved by sin (John 8:40). They rejected the truth and tried to kill Jesus.

For that reason, Jesus called them the children of the devil and they did not belong to God (John 8:47). Hearing this from Jesus, the Jews got offended and they continued to attack him. That leads us to verse 48 today. What did the Jews say about Jesus?

Firstly, Jesus was labelled as a Samaritan but Jesus was a Jew (v 48). For a Jew to be called a Samaritan was the greatest insult. The Samaritans in the eyes of Jews were the people who were ethically poor and thought of as outcasts. Secondly, Jesus was said to be demon-possessed (v 48). Thirdly, Jesus was making himself greater than Abraham and other prophets (v 53). Lastly, Jesus was seeking glory for himself (v 54).

How did Jesus respond to the Jews? Jesus gave them a glimpse of at least three answers.

Firstly, if a man keeps Jesus' words, he will never see death (v 51).

Secondly, he was not seeking his own glory, but the Father in heaven who honoured him (v 54).

Thirdly, Jesus existed even before Abraham was born and he claimed God's holy name "I am" (v 58).

By this time, the Jews must have heard enough from Jesus. That was why they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself and slipped away from the temple grounds (v 59).

## *FURTHER REFLECTION*

In today's reading, the Jews asked Jesus, who do you think you are? For us as Christians, Jesus is Lord, who gave himself for our sins. For those who hear and obey his words, they will be raised to live eternally with him. Whoever obeys his word will never see death. But, in the eyes of non-believers, Jesus may not be the Lord or Saviour of the world.



In our social circle, there are people who had patiently listened to our gospel sharing but still rejected Jesus as their Saviour. When they do not accept Jesus Christ, are we to consider them as the bad people in our life stories? Though our friends do not believe in Jesus Christ right away, he or she is still a good person. But the question is, will you give up on them? People reject Jesus for many reasons but still, we need to love them and continue to share the gospel.

Maybe, you can think of one person whom you had shared the gospel with before but that person claimed that Jesus is not God and rejected him. You can graciously ask God to open his or her heart to accept and believe in Jesus Christ, one day.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, my heart is burdened for my friend (name of your friend). Open and soften his/her heart to accept you as his/her personal Saviour. Please extend your mercy to my friend (name). In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Deaconess Logeswary Ang**  
**Deaconess in the Parish of Cornerstone, Ipoh, Perak**

*He replied, 'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!'*

*John 9:25*

### **I WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE!**

Our passage today is from John 9:1-34. We see Jesus healing the man who was a beggar and born blind. The Jews believed that the man was born blind because of his own sins or of his parents (vs 1-2). But Jesus did not see his sins as the cause of the man's blindness. Instead, Jesus said, he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him (vs 3-5). Jesus restored his eyesight and the man was healed (vs 6-7).

What a joyful moment for the man who had been blind all his life, but now can see! But his joyful moment turned into a moment of conflict when he needed to face the Pharisees and answer their questions.

I admire the faith of this man. Firstly, he believed and obeyed Jesus when Jesus told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (v 7). Secondly, he was not intimidated by the threat of the Pharisees. He stood up and shared his personal encounter with Jesus. He was not afraid to tell them what had happened and he was bold to defend himself (vs 13-33). Unfortunately, the Pharisees rejected him. As a result, he was excommunicated from the synagogue.

But Jesus came for this man again. Jesus found him and revealed to him that he is the Son of Man and the blind man was saved. Not only did he believe in Jesus but he also worshipped him (v 38).

It is very common that when we come to Christ, our faith may get tested. In this story of the blind man, his faith was tested by the Pharisees. He was cursed and evicted from the synagogues. But Jesus found him and he was saved.

### ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

Are you a new believer? Hatred and persecution may come when we start following Jesus. As a new believer, undoubtedly you may experience some struggles and challenges. At first, you may feel excited knowing Christ, but as soon as you enter into this new way of living, your faith can be severely tested by some of your non-believing friends and family members. You may struggle with doubts and try to rationalise everything. You may lose your family members and friends. But Jesus knows your struggles. He understands you.

Just as Jesus found the blind man, Jesus will help to show you that he is the true God. He knows your heart and the struggles you face. He will lead you to face those challenges. The

longer we walk with Jesus, the better we will understand him. As you grow, I believe God will use you to help others to believe in him. Let us continue to trust Jesus in every area of our life.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, you are my strength and my defence. Thank you for loving me. I pray for your power and strength to surrender my ways. Open my eyes to see you working around me. In trials and temptations, strengthen my belief and increase my faith in you.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Deaconess Logeswary Ang**  
**Deaconess in the Parish of Cornerstone, Ipoh, Perak**

*Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'*

*John 9:39*

### **SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS**

Our passage today is from John 9:35-41 and we come to the conclusion of the passage about Jesus healing the man who was born blind.

When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had excommunicated the blind man from the synagogue, he went and found him (v 35). The blind man knew Jesus' voice but he had never seen his face. When Jesus revealed himself to him, this poor blind man confessed Jesus as Lord and he bowed before him in worship (v 38).

The blind man believed in Jesus and his life was transformed after he came to faith in him. Jesus had not only opened his physical eyes but his spiritual eyes too. The blind man was saved. But how about those Pharisees who questioned him?

When Jesus healed the blind man, the Pharisees said that Jesus performed an unlawful work on the Sabbath day (v 13). They were continually pressing and interrogating the blind man and his parents (vs 18-23). They called Jesus a sinner (v 24).

In this passage, we see the two contrasting groups: the Pharisees and the blind man. The blind man was born blind and he couldn't see Jesus. But he was willing to allow Jesus to heal him. Because he believed, he was not only healed physically but spiritually.

On the other hand, the Pharisees could see Jesus and every good work that he had done but they were still blind to the things that Jesus did. They were among those who saw but were spiritually blind.

### ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

Who were the ones who were truly blind in this passage? The Pharisees became blind though they could see Jesus. Their hearts had no room for Jesus. They thought that they were good enough and knew everything. They thought they could see, but they were blind to their own sins and their own self-righteousness. The Pharisees excommunicated this poor blind beggar from the synagogue and this was a serious action. But it was far more serious for the Pharisees to reject Jesus and be lost forever.

In the Gospel, Jesus performed many other signs and miracles. Do miracles and healing still happen today? God's power has never changed and he still performs miracles today. Yet, many people do not believe in him. What about Christians who believe in God but are still

sceptical about the existence of true miracles and wonders? Healing and other miracles are still happening in the churches today. May God open our spiritual eyes that prevent us from seeing what God is doing in the world and our churches.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, when I was lost, you found me. Lord, thank you for saving me. Please open my spiritual eyes and ears. Please open my mind and my understanding to comprehend the things I see and hear. Deliver me and restore my spiritual sight if I have lost it, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Deaconess Logeswary Ang**  
**Deaconess in the Parish of Cornerstone, Ipoh, Perak**

*The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

*John 10:3*

### **JESUS IS THE GATE AND THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

Not everyone knows our names. How would you feel if someone you only met once remembers your name even after many years? But now, how would you feel if I tell you that Jesus remembers your name though you may not have seen him face to face?

In today's reading, Jesus compared himself with a shepherd and his followers with the sheep. Jesus said in verses 7 and 11, that he is the gate for the sheep and he is the good shepherd. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out (v 3).

Just as a shepherd's job is to lead his sheep through the gate to the sheep pen, Jesus is the gate for his followers and he leads them into heaven. Just as a shepherd, cares for his sheep, Jesus cares for those who follow him.

Unlike the thieves and robbers who come only to steal and kill (v 10), unlike the hired man who flees and runs away when there is danger (v 12), Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep so that the sheep may have their life (v 11). Jesus is the only gate by which we can be saved. There is no other gate.

In verses 14 and 15, Jesus said that he knows his sheep and his sheep know him just as the Father knows Jesus. The sheep recognises its own shepherd's voice. This shows a close relationship between the shepherd and his sheep.

Likewise, Jesus says to us today, if we are his followers, we too will listen to his voice. When Jesus is our Shepherd, we are part of his flock. Since we are his sheep, we ought to be able to hear his voice and follow him. We should not listen to a stranger's voice.

### ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

In today's world, there are many strangers who claim to be prophets and teachers. They lead people astray. Jesus warned us about this group of false teachers who would come and deceive his people.

As for me, recognising the true voice of the Shepherd requires effort. The best way to guard ourselves from false teaching is to know the truth. The truth is our Bible, the Word of God. We need to take this seriously. This passage reminds us how important it is to lean on and carefully study the Bible and to discern the voice of God. Furthermore, spending time in

prayer and talking with other brothers and sisters in Christ will also help us to learn to recognize his voice. He still speaks to us today. Do we really hear the voice of Jesus? Let us be like the sheep which listens to the shepherd's voice in God's flock.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, you are the gate to the sheepfold who provides all my needs. You are my good shepherd. I lack nothing. You make me lie down in green pastures and guide me along the right paths. I want to thank you for being my Shepherd in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Deaconess Logeswary Ang**  
**Deaconess in the Parish of Cornerstone, Ipoh, Perak**

*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

*John 10:28*

### **NO ONE CAN SNATCH ME OUT OF JESUS' HAND**

Thinking back to a time when I was young, my grandmother used to take me to her farm. In order to get to the farm, we had to cross the river by walking across an old wooden bridge. It was neither safe nor was it in good condition. And whenever we crossed the river, my grandmother would say, "Hold on to me tightly". Through the years, I grew to understand that she never let go of my hand whenever we crossed the river and I knew that nothing could snatch or separate me from her protective hand.

Going into today's reading in John 10:22-24, Jesus walked into the temple in Solomon's Porch and it was the Feast of Dedication and winter. The Jews surrounded him and asked him to tell them plainly if he was the Messiah. Jesus answered in verse 25, "I told you, but you don't believe because you are not my sheep."

The Pharisees did not believe in Jesus nor put their trust in him. Though many works had been done in his Father's name that testify about Jesus, they did not believe him. Why did they not believe? It was because they did not belong to Jesus.

In verses 27-29, Jesus explained that his own sheep would hear his voice and they would follow him. They shall not perish and no one will snatch them out of his hand. The Father in heaven had given them to Jesus and he holds them tightly. Jesus and the Father are one.

At this point in time, Jesus' saying angered the Pharisees. They understood that Jesus was making himself as God the Father and they picked up stones again to stone him (v 31).

### ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

We are living in a world with many threats and trials. But Jesus is holding our hands. Just as a shepherd protects his sheep, Jesus protects us. When we believe and hold on to Jesus, absolutely nothing can separate us from his hand.

Jesus died for us and he restores our relationship with the Father in heaven. Jesus became our connection, the bridge between us and the Father. Through his blood on the cross, everything is paid off now.

When we become a follower of Jesus, we will listen to his voice because we are his sheep. Our lives will never be the same. The gifts of eternal life and salvation that have been given



to us through Jesus can never be taken away from us. Nothing can snatch us from Jesus' hand and neither can anything separate us from the love of God. He will keep us safe. Let us continue to keep this faith, and hold on to Jesus until our last breath in this world.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Almighty God, I am grateful to you. I am convinced that nothing can snatch or separate me from your hand. No matter what life throws at me in this world, help me to hold on to you. Help me to praise and glorify you until my last breath on this earth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Deaconess Logeswary Ang**  
**Deaconess in the Parish of Cornerstone, Ipoh, Perak**

*But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.*

*John 10:38*

### TRUST IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE

Today's reading begins with a story of the Jews who were picking up stones to cast at Jesus. But Jesus did not run or hide when he met the rowdy Pharisees. He began to ask them which of his good works they were going to stone him for. The Jews told Jesus that it was not because of his works that they were going to stone him. It was for blasphemy! For them, although Jesus clearly was human, Jesus was making himself God!

If we take time to reflect on this incident, imagine that we are in Jesus' place. I believe all of us will frantically try to find a way out of this ordeal. The idea of torture and probably death will definitely make us frightened and panicked. But from the scriptures, we see that Jesus appears to be somewhat at peace with what is happening around him! He recognizes and accepts the difficult path that lies ahead of him! Jesus trusts that he is not alone but recognizes that his Father is with him. He has put 100% trust in his Father. As a human being, Jesus must have experienced a flood of emotions: fear, anger and turmoil. Since he was fully human, he also must have experienced great anxiety and fear but the trust and faith he had put in his Father have overcome the difficult trials and tribulations!

Since my ordination in 2001, I had my own trials, tribulations and my own "passion". I can relate to Jesus' predicament and emotions during his trials. We, like Jesus, have also struggled to understand and accept the realities of our situation. During difficult times, I bring my true emotions, the conversations and my concerns into my prayer. I lay them at the feet of Jesus daily with tears, to whom I have confidence in and grown to trust. I strongly believe that it is his wisdom and love that gives me confidence and hope, even when my emotions struggle within me. Doing work for God requires that we get past our feelings, circumstances, hurts, burdens and pain so we can pour out God's word and God's grace to others. Remember that God is bigger than our struggles, He is bigger than a bad day and this time on earth will be very short compared to the gift of Heaven promised to us.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

In our own trials and tribulations:

- Do we turn to God for help?
- Do we ask God to work a miracle and make everything right again?
- Or are we angry with God?
- Or do we distance ourselves from God?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

God of peace, my heart is heavy and filled with sadness. I spend so much time thinking, planning and worrying about my life. Help me to trust you when everything seems a mess. Can you lead me to make decisions that will help me, can you guide and help me I ask you to direct my steps. *(Taken from Mission Australia)*

**Reverend Issac Pandianadan**  
**Vicar of St. Andrew's Church, Ulu Tiram, Johor**

... and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign,...."  
*John 10:41*

### PEOPLE WERE ATTRACTED TO JOHN THE BAPTIST

What draws people to Evangelistic or Revival rallies? It is often miracles and deliverance. So practically every flyer sent out to promote an Evangelistic or Revival Rally must have the following, "Come and be healed and delivered". The organizers know this is the "magic word" to attract the crowd. John the Baptist did not perform any miracles, yet he attracted crowds (Luke 3:7). John writes in John 10:41, "...They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign ...".

Why did John the Baptist attract crowds?

1. Because he pointed the people to Jesus (John 1:35-37) and not because of miraculous signs. For that was his mission and he was very clear about that. His mission was to see Jesus increase and he decrease (John 3:30). Today, sometimes, pulpits, testimonies, Facebook, Instagrams, etc. are used to attract the attention of people to an individual's goodness and achievement rather than to point people to Christ. The individual's popularity and wealth increase at the expense of the extension of God's Kingdom and glory.
2. Because he spoke the truth about Jesus. He did not "sugarcoat" the message to please the people. He started off his mission by calling on the people to repent (Matthew 3:2). His message was clear and sharp. He did not compromise the word of God to please his hearers and to gain popularity. His word was pure and powerful that those who came to hear him preach asked, "What should we do then?" (Luke 3:10). John the Baptist's life was an incarnation of his message. He lived his message. We read of a similar response to the message of Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37).
3. Because he warned the people of the coming judgement. He instilled the fear of God. Judgement is something many would not want to hear. John the Baptist spoke boldly about the judgement of God. He said, "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Luke 3:9).

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

As we journey through this period of Lent, let us examine ourselves:

1. Is our faith in Jesus based on his Word or on signs and wonders?
2. Do our words attract people or chase them away?
3. Are we pointing people to Jesus Christ through our words and actions or using Jesus as a platform for our popularity and glory?

4. Are our lives an incarnation of the gospel message we are trying to convey to the world? If yes, praise God. Sadly, in the case of some Christians, apart from their Christian names, there is NOT much or any difference between them and non-Christians.
5. Do the people among whom we live see in us the fear of God? Henry Blackaby writes, "...the loss of the fear of Holy God – is nearly always the root of all sin, even in our days. When God's people lose their fear of God, they soon lose their fear of sin. When they lose their fear of sin, they depart from God and become of little use to God." When we depart from Jesus then we are just religious people and not disciples of Jesus. It is good to remind ourselves, that in heaven there is only place for disciples of Jesus and not for religious people.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, as I journey through this period of Lent, shine your light upon every area of my life. Guide and strengthen me to confess all my sins and to totally surrender every area of my life to you, to be Christ-focused, always pointing others to you, to live according to your Word, and may your holiness and the second coming of Jesus to judge the world, instil in me the godly fear to resist the devil and all his works. Guide and strengthen me to be a true disciple of Jesus. In Jesus' most precious and holy name, I pray, Amen.

**Venerable Edward M. John,  
Archdeacon of Southern Archdeaconry  
Vicar of St. Christopher's Church, Johor Bahru**

*Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'*

*John 11:25-26*

### FOR HE IS OUR HEALER

Every one of us will go through trials and tribulations in our life. Sickness is a common trial many people face in their lives today. Either you or someone you care about will be seriously ill during this life and somehow, we are affected by the sickness. Dealing with an illness can be one of the most stressful and anxiety-inducing periods of life. For those who are sick, it can be isolating and scary. For the loved ones of the patient, it can be overwhelming and they feel helpless and overwhelmed with painful emotions. Jesus' friend Lazarus did not die suddenly as we read that Jesus received the message that Lazarus was ill, implying some kind of prolonged illness (v 3). This sickness resulted in death.

When my father was diagnosed with dementia, my faith was challenged in ways I never thought possible because the prospect of losing my father was unacceptable. I began to question God and blamed him for the suffering my mom was going through. But God walked me through that fire and I came out on the other side with renewed faith and hope. We managed to pull together in this time of adversity and were able to accept the inevitable.

As the years went by, along with other trials, I have faced an ever-growing mound of health issues which were not severe but somehow disturb my ministry. Sometimes it seems like I cannot even catch a breath! I have cried out to God that it is not fair because I want to do more for him. Why me? I do not know why my health is not what it used to be when I was in my 20's and 30's. I may never have those answers in this life. I also do not understand why so many others around me have worse sufferings than I do. But I do know God is faithful and just. He taught me to trust him with my sickness and weakness. Brothers and sisters in Christ, knowing that he is in control in times of sickness and weakness may help lift some of the worries and fears that often come with illness. When sickness comes, we are brought to our knees and reminded of our weakness. In those moments, God's Word reveals he can "restore our health" (Jeremiah 30:17) for he is our Healer (Exodus 15:26).

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

- Is it God's will for me to be sick?
- Is sickness one of the ways that God works things together for our good?
- Is sickness one of the ways that we are to suffer for him?

## *FOR INTERCESSION*

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need: We humbly beseech you to behold, visit, and relieve your sick servant (name) for whom our prayers are desired. Look upon him with the eyes of your mercy; comfort him/her with a sense of your goodness; preserve him from the temptations of the enemy; and give him patience under his affliction. In your good time, restore him to health, and enable him to lead the remainder of his life in your fear, and to your glory; and grant that finally he may dwell with you in life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Anglican Church of North America*)

**Reverend Issac Pandianadan**  
**Vicar of St. Andrew's Church, Ulu Tiram, Johor**

*When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.*

*John 11:33*

### JESUS THE COMFORTER

Talking about dying can be hard. There is no right or wrong way to deal with death and dying. Your beliefs, values, culture, experiences and circumstances will eventually determine your belief system. Coming from a very conservative family background, hardly anyone talks about death in my family.

Death and dying have remained taboo topics in many societies despite their inevitability. But death is very painful and if we do not handle it carefully, it can affect our sanity and eventually bring harm to our relationship with God.

Lazarus was dead and Mary was greatly distressed. Probably Martha and Mary lost the source of their strength and protection and they were thinking about their future. Their grief and agony brought tears to Jesus as well. Jesus wept while comforting Mary and Martha who were grieving the death of their brother Lazarus.

Recently we lost a wonderful family friend who had been our joy and love. The loss really made me go into deep agony and grief; nothing could calm me or bring me out of this situation. It began to affect my ministry and I lost the joy of serving God. I began to question the reason for the death and why there was no supernatural intervention by Jesus! But eventually, what the Bible says about grief gave me a calm assurance and peace in the power of Almighty God. It reveals a knowledge of the tender love and compassion that Christ has for each of his hurting children.

In the story, we see that Jesus did not rebuke Mary for a lack of faith. He understood and sympathized with the family. Her pain mattered to him. The Lord was with her. She and her family mattered to him. As I know my Lord is near to me, I can talk to him about my feelings. In the case of Mary and Martha, they needed to tell Jesus how they felt about his delay. So, we may need to talk to him about our loss, our loneliness, our lack and grief. In John 16:7, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Helper. Other translations state he is Comforter, Counsellor or Advocate. As we pour out our hearts to him in prayer, the Holy Spirit meets us there with comfort, counsel, advocacy, and strong help.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Christians believe that death is not the end of our existence. That belief has shaped the Christian faith since Jesus Christ rose from the dead after his execution 2,000 years ago. This



does not mean that Christians are somehow immune from or unaffected by the pain of grief and loss when a close friend or relative dies. But it means that they have hope in something eternal that goes beyond life and death as we know it. This hope sustains them in such difficult times. (*christianity.org.uk*)

*FOR INTERCESSION*

O Lord, we call upon you in our time of sorrow, that you give us the strength and will to bear our heavy burdens until we can again feel the warmth and love of your divine compassion. Be mindful of us and have mercy on us while we struggle to understand life's hardships.

**Reverend Issac Pandianadan**  
**Vicar of St. Andrew's Church, Ulu Tiram, Johor**

*Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.'*

*John 11:47-48*

### WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE IN FOLLOWING JESUS?

Last year, I had a friend who called me after many years. He was extremely friendly to me even though we had lost touch for a few decades. He wanted to have lunch and at lunch he asked questions about my wife and children. He was asking questions about my church and he acted as though he was trying to help me with my mission work in Johor Bharu. I thought, "Wow, this guy is really nice and I would enjoy being friends with him."

He even made plans to get together as families. I thought a new friendship was brewing after a very long time. Well, it didn't take very long for me to find out why he was so friendly! He was trying to sell me a water dispenser! All of his friendly acts were nice, but they were ultimately an attempt to cover up his true motives. Over time his true motives were exposed. He was not truly interested in friendship, he was interested in selling me a product.

Similarly in today's passage we will begin to see the true motive of the religious leaders. We probably would think that people who have witnessed the raising of Lazarus will be filled with joy and awe and become more faithful. But instead, as we read in verse 46, a group of the Jews who had visited Mary went and told the Pharisees what had happened. They were not spreading the good news neither had they become disciples of Jesus, but were merely bringing accusations and news that people were following Jesus in large numbers. So, instead of believing the signs and wonders from Jesus, the religious leaders and the spectators desired to put Jesus to death.

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, in the same manner, *what is your motive in following Jesus?* If your motive in following Jesus is what you can get from Jesus, then you are wrong. If your primary motive is "I don't want to go to hell", then you are wrong. If your motive for following Jesus is to make your life better or fix your problems, then you are probably believing the wrong gospel. Our motive in following Jesus should be to give the best to God and fulfil his will. God has called you to a specific task and it can only be accomplished when you give it the best of your time, effort, gifts, and focus. *"Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself; for it was to this life that God called you"* (1 Timothy 6:12). He was focused and committed to the call of God on his life, nobody could distract or discourage him, and he gave God his best. I believe that being able to give your best at all times tells a lot about you. Many people will thrive to give their best to man but won't bother much about what they give God. The truth is that God expects and demands yours very best.

## *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Here are some specific questions to help us evaluate our own motives:

- If no one ever knows what I am doing (giving, serving, sacrificing), would I still do it?
- If there was no visible payoff for doing this, would I still do it?
- Would I joyfully take a lesser position if God asked me to?

## *FOR INTERCESSION*

Heavenly Father, thank you for the precious blood of Christ, which I need today and every day. Forgive me for my impure thoughts and motives. Sanctify my heart by your Word and Spirit. Help me to embody the purity, love and obedience of Christ today, for your glory and the good of all. I love you, Lord. Amen. (*fullyknownfullyloved.com*)

**Reverend Issac Pandianadan**  
**Vicar of St. Andrew's Church, Ulu Tiram, Johor**

*Then Mary took about half a litre 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 12:3*

### COSTLY WORSHIP

John 12.1-11, gives us a valuable teaching about two contrasting followers of Jesus. Mary shows us the whole idea of costly worship and Judas the chosen disciple who hid behind religious pretexts as a pretence for greed.

When Mary saw Jesus, she took a litre of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. The value of the oil was 300 days wages and it was something outrageous to be done by a middle-class community by our standards. What a humble and beautiful act of love towards Jesus by Mary. But Judas objected to this act by claiming that it should have been sold and the money given to the poor. But the Gospel states clearly that Judas was only interested in the money since he used to steal from the money bag. Jesus rebuked Judas!

While Judas valued the perfume for its monetary gain, Mary highly valued Jesus. Mary loved the Lord so much that she gave the best that she had. The BEST not the REST from the leftovers. We also can see that Mary's selfless devotion arises from her love and gratitude. Although it is not mentioned in the Bible, her love was definitely for Jesus' action in raising her brother from the dead (John 11:5). Worship is giving our lives to God and our fellow believers, seeking first his Kingdom, fixing our eyes on the author and perfecter of our faith (1 John 3:16; Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 12:2).

Worship should cost us something. It involves giving up my rights and desires so that I might meet God's desire to be worshipped. Jesus didn't just notice the love and worship of the woman, but he also noticed the lack of love and concern from Judas. If we truly grasp what God has done for us, our love for him will increase and we will want to give him things that are valuable and important to us.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

There is a price we must pay when we are chosen by God to follow Jesus. Jesus himself said in Matthew 16:24, "If people want to follow me, they must give up the things they want." Jesus said it because it is very difficult for many to give up certain things especially their valuable self for God's ministry.

1. Have I considered the cost of following Jesus?
2. What is Jesus telling me to leave and turn my back on?
3. Are there comforts holding me back in my walk with Christ?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness and your endless grace. Help me to follow you with all my heart and to live out your teachings in my daily life. I pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen

**Reverend Issac Pandianadan**  
**Vicar of St. Andrew's Church, Ulu Tiram, Johor**

*Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*

*John 12:24*

### DEATH LEADS TO LIFE

The title of a very old pop song says, “Everyone wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die”! One of the great paradoxes taught by Jesus is that death leads to life. “It is in dying that one is born to eternal life”, as the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi also declares.

The crowds were ecstatic as Jesus rode into Jerusalem at the beginning of the first Holy Week. Here was a Jewish king and deliverer, raised from among their own brethren. Here was their answer to the end of Roman occupation and oppression. Here was their miracle-working leader that no power could withstand – even demons fled at the mention of his name and the dead were raised to life!

The disciples were equally excited. Jesus was their claim to fame. Soon Jesus would sit upon his throne, and they would be granted positions of power, prominence and prestige. No longer would they be “nobodies”.

These two groups completely misinterpreted Jesus’ words when he declared, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” Jesus’ glory would not come by supplanting an earthly ruler with a heavenly one but through his obedience to God, his Father, and by his death on the cross. He had not come to advocate a *regime* change as much as a change in the *realm* in which we live.

This is the realm where we learn to love our enemies, consider others better than ourselves, turn the other cheek and walk the extra mile for others. It is the realm where a seed dies and only then bears much fruit, where whoever loves his life will lose it but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternity. It is the realm where if anyone would follow him, they must first deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow him...to death!

In calling us to die, Jesus is giving us eternal life the only way it can be given. He has called us to die because we are in the way of having life. It is our pride, our rebellion, our independence, our foolishness and our arrogance that stand in the way of his offer of abundant life. We tell ourselves that we are okay. We act as if we are smarter than God. We like our little kingdoms more than we love his. We think our rules are better than his. We tell ourselves that present pleasure is better than eternal gain. Yes, we must die first to ourselves if we are ever going to live.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Jesus' death indeed "bore much fruit". Our reading today reminds us that, "If anyone serves me, he must follow me". Jesus was obedient unto death. In which of these areas must we learn to die to ourselves? Self-importance? Self-absorption? Self-sufficiency? Self-interests? Self-satisfaction? If anyone follows Jesus to the cross, he says, "the Father will honour him".

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Pray today that God may reveal areas in your life, that you must first die to, before you can produce abundant fruit.

**Venerable Dr Vijendra Daniel**  
**Archdeacon of Upper Central Archdeaconry**  
**Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya, Selangor**

*Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?"*

*John 12:27*

### SAVE ME FROM THIS HOUR

In his last days on earth before his death and crucifixion, our dear Lord and Master went through a very painful and torturous process. He declared, "Now is my *soul* troubled" (v 27).

Did it ever occur to you how much it cost Jesus to atone for your sins? Maybe you think that because "*In him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, powers, rulers and authorities and all things have been created through him and for him.*" (Colossians 1:16-17) that he was able to endure the pain and suffering of Calvary. Or maybe you think that just because Jesus was the Son of God, he would not feel the agony of rejection and separation from his Father or that he would not be affected by the humiliating taunts and verbal abuse of the crowds.

A brief glimpse of Christ's excruciating distress and anguish can be seen in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Then he said to them, '*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.*'" Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, '*My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.*'" (Matthew 26:38-39).

Why did Jesus endure all this suffering? The answer is simple. He said, "It was for this very reason I came to this hour." (v 27). What reason? He gives us three:

1. To glorify God through his obedience (v 28).
2. To drive out the prince of this world by his authority (v 31).
3. To draw all people to himself by his death and resurrection (v 32).

There was no other "shortcut" for our redemption. Our sins necessitated a blood sacrifice for atonement. Jesus, the Lamb of God, had to be "lifted up" on Golgotha and the cross of Calvary for our sake. It cost him his life.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Our Lord Jesus Christ endured intense agony to liberate us from our sins, the powers of darkness and death. Have we trivialized his pain by disregarding his suffering and living for ourselves and our agendas? Paul reminds us that we are not our own because we were bought with the heavy price of Christ's blood and therefore, we must live a life worthy of our calling. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Ephesians 4:1-2).



*FOR INTERCESSION*

Pray today that God will give you a deeper appreciation and understanding of the price that was paid for your freedom.

**Venerable Dr Vijendra Daniel**  
**Archdeacon of Upper Central Archdeaconry**  
**Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya, Selangor**

*I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.*  
*John 12:46*

### WHO IS THIS?

Matthew, writing in his Gospel, records that when Jesus entered Jerusalem that first “Palm Sunday”, the whole city was stirred and people were asking, “Who is this?” (Matthew 21:10). The way we answer this question can have eternal consequences. Was this person on a donkey, that drove the rambunctious crowds to shout, “Hosanna! Save us!”, a prophet, a king, a political liberator or something much more?

No doubt the crowds had heard and seen the many miracles Jesus had performed in Judea and Galilee. The raising of Lazarus in the nearby town of Bethany was still fresh in their minds. No wonder they were “stirred” and excited when he rode into Jerusalem. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”, they cried out. Matthew records the declaration of others in the crowd, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” (Matthew 21:11). Yet, others shouted, “Blessed is the King of Israel!” (John 12:13).

For many people in Jerusalem that day, Jesus was their superhero. His popularity was directly proportional to the number of miracles he had performed. In fact, Luke records that the crowds were joyfully praising God in loud voices for “*all the miracles they had seen*” (Luke 19:37). As long as there was a miracle worker in town, everyone wanted to be on his team but it didn’t take long for the crowds to turn around and reject Jesus. Isaiah was right. Their eyes were blinded, and their hearts were hardened (v 40). Even the few who believed in Jesus did not want to totally commit or surrender their hearts to Jesus because they “*loved praise from men more than praise from God.*” (v 43).

Why did the crowds turn?

1. He **challenged** the crowds to **authentic discipleship**.

*I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. (John 12:46, 1 John 1:6)*

2. He **confronted** them about a day of **accountability**.

*There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. (John 12:48)*

3. He was **committed** only to the Father's **agenda** and not to theirs.

*For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” (John 12:49-50)*

### ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

What are your motives for following Jesus? Who is he to you? Just someone to make you feel good? A divine insurance policy? Does he exist to serve you or do you exist to serve him?

*When Christianity comes to be stated primarily in terms of meeting human needs rather than glorifying God, we have an unacceptable situation...then God becomes the servant who is loved for what he can do for us, and we are little concerned about what we can do for him. Instead of emulating the prayer of Samuel, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”, we will in effect, be saying, “Listen, Lord, for your master is speaking.*

Milliard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Mind & Heart*

### ***FOR INTERCESSION***

Jesus, you are my Lord and my God. Help me to follow you with an undivided heart, ready to obey your every command.

**Venerable Dr Vijendra Daniel**  
**Archdeacon of Upper Central Archdeaconry**  
**Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya, Selangor**

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done to you.*

*John 13:15*

### LOVE IN ACTION

The opening verse in John 13 sets the scene for Chapters 13—17: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” The word “love” is a key term in these chapters, appearing a total of thirty-one times. Jesus showed the full extent of his love to us and this is demonstrated through the laying down of his life (John 15:13) on the cross. This same love is also evident in the humble service of Jesus in washing the feet of his disciples.

During the first century, it was customary for a slave to wash the dusty (and perhaps smelly) feet of guests before they entered the house. However, when the disciples gathered for the evening meal, there was no slave in sight to wash their feet. According to Jewish custom, foot-washing was something only a Gentile slave was required to do, an act reserved for the lowest class of slaves. None of the disciples were willing to wash the feet of others and this suggests that each of them considered themselves more important than the others. Consequently, they would rather have their meals with smelly feet!

Seeing that no one was willing to humble himself, Jesus did something completely unexpected. He took off his outer garment, wrapped a towel around his waist, and washed the feet of the disciples. By doing so, Jesus took on the role of a slave. He demonstrated that true love knows no boundary. Imagine for a moment, Jesus—the creator of the universe, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, the one seated at the right hand of the Father—willingly took on the role of a humble slave in washing the feet of undeserving disciples, including one who he knew was going to betray him.

After washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus spelt out the implications of his actions: “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (v 16). Although foot-washing ceremony is often carried out on Maundy Thursday in our Christian tradition, we must not forget the example of humility and servanthood exemplified by Jesus in serving others. This is what God is like—he washes feet, even the feet of one who would later betray him.

How can we follow the example of Christ in our service to one another today?

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Think of someone or a group of people who you could help in any practical way: perhaps taking a person out for a meal, providing transport for daily chores or medical appointments, or just offering some words of encouragement.

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Lord, I ask for your wisdom, guidance, and strength this day to help me serve others. Help me see the needs of those around me so that I would be willing to step in and help in any way I can. Amen.

**Reverend Dr Lim Kar Yong**  
**Assisting Priest in St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya**

*As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.*

*John 13:30*

### THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT

Pieter Pourbus was a famous Flemish Renaissance painter who lived in Bruges in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. One of his well-known pieces of work is a provocative painting of the scene of the Last Supper. In this painting, Judas is portrayed as taking a bag of money and making his way out of the room. One of the disciples is seen pulling his cloak, trying to prevent him from leaving the room. Towards the right of the painting where the door is, a monstrous figure with claws and a skull representing the devil, stands there, waiting to embrace Judas as he exits the room.

The devil had earlier tempted Judas to betray his master (John 13:2), and Jesus was not unaware of the devil's plan (v 21). During the evening meal, Jesus specifically mentioned that one of the disciples would betray him, not once, but at least three times (vs 18, 21, 26). The fact that Jesus repeatedly revealed about the betrayal was to prompt Judas to reconsider his decision. The act of Jesus dipping a piece of bread and giving it to Judas was a severe warning to him about his impending action. It was as if Jesus was openly telling Judas about the evil act he was about to do and granting him an opportunity to reevaluate his decision. However, Judas had already made up his mind by allowing Satan to enter him (v 27). After Judas went out of the room, John 13:30 ends with this phrase: "And it was night." This phrase is redundant as we know that the Last Supper was held at night. However, we should not miss the double emphasis of this phrase. No doubt it was dark outside, but once Judas decided to walk away from the Light of the world (John 8:12), he walked into perpetual darkness. He walked away from the presence of God into the realms of the devil.

The juxtaposition of light and darkness is a recurring theme in the Gospel of John (John 1:4–5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46). The light shines to dispel the darkness, and yet, Judas prefers to remain in darkness rather than in the light. Judas serves as a warning for us, that we should not walk in darkness. Let us allow the light of Christ to shine in the darkness of our hearts, so that we may repent from any deeds of darkness and walk as children of light (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:8–13; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:5–7).

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). How can we live as children of light?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Almighty God, shine your light into the darkness in my life. I name this specific dark place in my life (pause for a moment of silence). Grant me hope and strength, and the heart to move from darkness into your glorious light. Amen.

**Reverend Dr Lim Kar Yong**  
**Assisting Priest in St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya**

*Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

*John 14:12*

### **DO WE HEAR THE ROOSTER CROW?**

Peter was a self-confident disciple. He boasted about being willing to lay down his life for Jesus (v 37). He was so sure of himself. However, Jesus knew his disciple better. Not only did Jesus question Peter about his claim but predicted that he would deny his master three times before the rooster crows. True enough, a few hours later, Peter denied Jesus three times during his trials (John 18:15–18; 25–27). His actions illustrate the emptiness of his earlier boasting.

Peter probably did not realise he had denied his master three times—at least not until he heard the rooster crow (John 18:27). This signifies a defining moment for Peter. He suddenly realised he had done what he should not have done. Peter followed Jesus, trying to prove his loyalty, but he caved in when questioned about his identity (John 18:17, 25, 26).

How many of us have done something we knew we should never do? Or perhaps we have been justifying ourselves in doing those things we know are contrary to God's holy scriptures, moral values, character, and integrity? Remember, we can also be like Peter as we are drawn step by step into a deeper compromise of our faith until our confession is nothing but a continuous denial of our Lord. In times like this, by the grace and mercy of God, we need to hear the rooster crow. We need those defining moments in our lives to remind us how far we have fallen from our walk with the Lord and how we need to renew ourselves once again in our service for God.

Remember, Peter's denials and failures did not place him beyond redemption, for we see that later in John 21 Peter was restored and recommissioned by the Lord. He subsequently did great things for his Lord after Pentecost. But the most important thing is this: Do we hear the rooster crow?

### ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

Take a moment to reflect on your life. Like Peter, have we denied Jesus as well, not that we deliberately wanted to do so, but in moments of weakness, did we choose the easy way out? Did we give in to the weakness of our flesh? Did we surrender to temptation? Do we hear the rooster crow, reminding us that we have fallen away?



*FOR INTERCESSION*

Merciful Father, inspire us with the faithful life of Peter, who faltered and denied your Son our Saviour but yet was fully restored to glorify you in his service and death, that in following his example we may ever stand firm upon the sure foundation of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

**Reverend Dr Lim Kar Yong**  
**Assisting Priest in St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya, Selangor**

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

*John 14:27*

### THE PEACE JESUS PROMISED

Jesus promises the gift of peace to his disciples and all of us today (v 27). This peace is the fulfilment of the peace the prophets in the Old Testament foretold (for example, Isaiah 9:6-7; 52:7; Ezekiel 37:26). The peace Jesus mentions here is not the peace we experience in the absence of war in Ukraine or Gaza or cessation of hostilities from enemies. It is not the *Pax Romana* (Peace of Rome) propagated by Caesar Augustus in the first century. Rather, this peace Jesus promises is the quiet confidence and trust in God's faithfulness. It is the peace that comes from our restored relationship with God through Christ. It is the peace knowing that God is sovereign and he remains in control of all situations. This peace is grounded in God and not in circumstances. This is the reason why Jesus declares that the peace he gives us is not like what the world gives (v 27).

Because of this peace that Jesus gives, he exhorts us with these words: "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (v 27). This is the second time Jesus reassures us not to be anxious (John 14:1). When Jesus spoke these words, the disciples were already aware of Jesus' departure. During these final moments before his crucifixion, Jesus knew his disciples would be full of fear, uncertainty, and anxiety about the days ahead. What would their lives be like without their beloved master? Jesus promised that he would not leave them as orphans (v 18) and he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever (vs 16, 26).

In this life, we face all sorts of anxiety, confusion, and uncertainties. We may lose our jobs and our financial situation could be severely affected. We may be diagnosed with unfavourable health conditions. We may see the lives of our loved ones cut short unexpectedly. During such troubling times, let us hold on to the promise Jesus gives us: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (v 27). It is this "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). Let us rest in God, knowing that we are safe in his arms.

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
when sorrows like sea billows roll;  
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,  
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

How can we let the peace of God rule in our hearts?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Loving God, grant me peace of mind and calm my troubled heart. Help me to see beyond the storms and trust in your loving kindness that never ceases. Amen.

**Reverend Dr Lim Kar Yong**  
**Assisting Priest in St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya, Selangor**

*Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”*

*John 15:4*

### **REMAIN IN CHRIST**

Jesus uses lessons from nature to illustrate what the life of discipleship is like. He declares that he is the true vine, God the Father is the gardener, and we are the branches (vs 1, 5). In a vineyard, branches that do not produce fruit are cut off while those that produce fruit do not escape the knife as well. They are pruned to produce even more fruit.

As Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure, he foresees that they will face hardships and trials in the days ahead. He consoles and reassures them. He invites them to abide in him so that they can draw the strength and faith needed to weather the dark and stormy days. This is a reminder that we should never trust in our own strength. We live in a society that promotes individualism and independence. We promote self-worth, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency. We are often told that our success is determined by our confidence and fortitude. It becomes very easy to think that we could draw on our resources to meet all the challenges in life.

As we commemorate Good Friday today, let us focus our attention on Jesus our Saviour who gave his all for us. Let us remember his words to us: “Remain in me” (v 4). The word translated as “remain” appears a total of eleven times in our reading for today, suggesting that it is a dominant theme. Jesus spells out the consequences if we do not remain in him. We will not bear fruit (v 4). If we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off (vs 2, 6). We are reminded that apart from Jesus, we can do nothing (v 5). If we remain in him, we will be fruitful (vs 4, 5, 16), our prayers will be answered (v 7), and we will be his authentic disciples (v 8).

Let us remain in Christ, feed ourselves with God’s word, and keep his commands. Jesus assures us that the harvest will be bountiful.

### ***FURTHER REFLECTION***

God wants us to be fruitful. Like a good gardener, he prunes our lives by removing things in our lives that hinder our fruitfulness. Does our life need pruning? If so, will we allow God to prune us so that we can be fruitful?

*FOR INTERCESSION*

Father, you cut down the unfruitful branch for burning and prune the fruit to make it bear more fruit. Enable us to remain in you so that we may produce much fruit out of your abundant grace and be firmly rooted in the power and mercy of your Son, Jesus our Saviour, so that you may gather from us fruit worthy of eternal life. Amen.

**Assisting Priest in Reverend Dr Lim Kar Yong  
St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya**

*If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

*John 15:19*

### THE WORLD'S HATRED

According to the Open Doors, there are over 360 million Christians around the world who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Persecution comes in different ways, some experience rejection and isolation from their families, friends and communities. Others are denied access to basic needs like water, food and health care. Some face violent abuse, imprisonment and even death.

The Bible has since long ago reminded us about being persecuted for following Christ, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” (John 15: 19)

The world loves those who belong to the world and its purpose is to tightly bind people to the world of the devil and Satan. If you do not belong to the world, they will then hate you, because the devil hates the one and living God who is opposes his evil plan and draws people away from him and to be with our Saviour Jesus Christ.

We must understand that it is impossible for us to gain sympathy from the world. It is normal for Christians to be persecuted by the world. Therefore, when we go through difficulties and obstacles, do not be surprised, let alone be discouraged because the Lord Jesus has clearly told us about this, and he promised that he will be with us always. We should grab every opportunity to stand with the Suffering Lord and obey His command to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? If not, why would you think you are somehow better and will not be persecuted?

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

**We remember those who died for their faith and martyrs:**

Almighty God, by whose grace and power your holy martyrs and all Christians triumphed over suffering and were faithful unto death: strengthen us with your grace, that we may

endure reproach and persecution and faithfully bear witness to the name of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. (Collect for Martyr, Church of England)

**Right Reverend Dr Stephen Soe**  
**Suffragan Bishop of the Northern Region of The Diocese of West Malaysia**  
**Vicar of Pro Cathedral of St. George the Martyr, Penang**

*“Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.”*  
*John 20:8*

### BELIEVING AND UNDERSTANDING

In today’s passage, we read Mary Magdalene observed, *“that the stone had been removed from the entrance.”* She was too troubled and did not go into the tomb to know more. She ran to the disciples and shared, *“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him.”*

Mary’s interpretations of what she witnessed must have troubled Peter and John (*the other disciples*) to the core. They ran to the tomb. Though Peter ran first, John overtook him and arrived at the tomb first. From the entrance of the tomb, John saw partially at first, *“strips of linen lying there”*. Interestingly John did not go in until Peter arrived.

Peter saw *“strips of linen lying there as well as the burial cloth”*. Special attention is given to an important detail in the ESV version of the Bible; *“The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen”*. If you excuse yourself from the table but fold up your napkin, you indicate to the servers that you are not finished with your meal, and that you will return shortly. *“Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)”*

Like Mary, we are sometimes overwhelmed by what we have experienced. Shaken to the core, we are not in a position to take stock of the situation and reflect, pray, and wait for further insights and discernment. We are tormented by our own conclusions that are depressing and lacking hope. The wonderful lesson Mary has taught me is that during times like these it helps to run to other disciples of Christ to be vulnerable; to share with them in all honesty my fears, disappointments and emotions.

Peter and John acted on the witness of Mary. They explored for themselves. Both Peter and John have not yet understood from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. But I believe that something about the folded clothes that John saw, reminded him of the times the Saviour might have folded his napkins and excused himself from the table, and returned. The cultural significance of this table etiquette, triggered an insight, a discernment, in John. He saw and believed. Though at this point John did not understand from Scripture, something from the tradition (table etiquette) and reason, and the gift of God’s grace, enabled him to believe.



Like them, I too take time to understand that it is the finger of the Lord at work as His Word has promised. Somehow bursting forth through the sadness, bitterness, and confusion; I am enabled to believe. I thank God for the disciples of Christ who bear with me when I repeatedly share the same distressing and depressing experience. I thank God for those who go the extra mile to explore for me and with me, as Peter and John have done.

The tomb is empty. Christ is Risen. He will come again.  
Wishing you a blessed Easter.  
Veni Sancte Spiritus

### *FURTHER REFLECTION*

Let us take a look at our lives and see moments and situations where God's hand was in it. Let us see and believe that he is always there for us.

### *FOR INTERCESSION*

Almighty God, I thank you for your gift of Salvation. I ask that you will continue to grant me the humility to be vulnerable with my sisters and brothers in my struggles. I thank you for your Word and your disciples, for helping me. And when I find it difficult to understand, Lord help me to believe. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen

**Right Reverend Dr D. Steven Abbarow**  
**Diocesan Bishop**  
**The Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia**