



lift up your voice
SINGING THROUGH LENT AND EASTER



"All of creation," wrote the twelfth-century German abbess and composer, St. Hildegard of Bingen, "is a song of praise to God," a swirling symphony all around us.

"To sing is to pray twice," St. Augustine, the fourth-century North African bishop, is said to have once remarked – that is, first praying through the song's words, and second through its music.

And for Martin Luther, next to theology, music is the greatest art: "For if you want to revive the sad, startle the jovial, encourage the despairing, humble the conceited, pacify the raving, mollify the hate-filled...what can you find that is more effective than music?"

This Lenten season, why not take the Christian musical treasury as your guide, this sacred art, thousands of years old, in which big ideas and beautiful melodies come together?

In this devotional, each week, biblical texts and beloved songs inspire practices you can try yourself, with your family or friends, or with your congregation. As the days lengthen, the birds will sing – and so will we, strengthening our spirits, praying twice, and joining in with creation's symphony of sorrow and joy, anguish and comfort, death and new life.

Lift up your voice, and sing!



A NOTE ON SONGS & SINGING

First, many people have been told a lie along the way: that they “can’t sing,” or “can’t carry a tune,” or should only sing in the car or the shower. But the writer of the Psalms – that songbook in the middle of the Bible – has it right: we’re called to “make a joyful noise,” not a perfect pitch (Psalm 100:1). So if that noise is, well, more noisy than melodious – so be it! When it comes to joyful noise-making, loud is better than proud!

And second, music is a form of culture, and there are lots of different styles and repertoires to choose from across Christian history. The songs and hymns included here are widely-known “classics” from a range of styles; consider these pages a diverse jumping-off point, not a complete list. Part of the pleasure is to get to know songs that have stood the test of time, and so to “sing with our ancestors” from different eras and cultural traditions.

So if a given song is familiar to you – great! Lean in and sing out! And if it’s unfamiliar, take it as an invitation to experience one of the gems in the Christian treasury. As we go along, feel free to add your own gems, favorites, and “classics” from your local repertoire, too, lifting our voices and joining in when our neighbors lift theirs, each of us in one corner or another of creation’s magnificent choir.

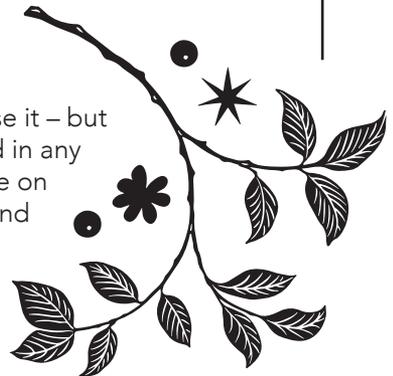


HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Each week includes a simple candlelight service, including three songs from different musical traditions (see the “Lyrics and Links” doc for words and performances). Pick one song each week, or sing them all, or let them inspire you to sing other songs – and as you sing, try using different singing practices, such as:

- Sing a capella (this is often best!).
- If you’re a musician (or know one), sing with simple accompaniment.
- Sing along via the link (see the “Lyrics and Links” doc).
- Sing with a partner, alternating lines or verses, or in harmony.
- Sing or hum while walking.
- Sing in solidarity, even from afar: for example, sing a sad song “with” or on behalf of those who are sorrowful, a joyful song “with” those who are jubilant, and so on.
- Sing in a space with excellent acoustics (showers count!).
- Sing each song multiple times each week, so it starts to seep into your heart.
- Sing to begin or end each day, or as grace before meals.
- Try committing a verse or two to memory. Notice how memorizing helps you see and feel things in the song you didn’t before. It’s like magic!

If you have a hymnal handy, feel free to use it – but the “Lyrics and Links” doc works, too, and in any case, try to free yourself from dependence on books, paper, devices, accompaniment, and so on. Live with these songs for a week, and they’ll stay with you throughout Lent – and beyond!



ash wednesday

light

Light eight candles (tea lights, for example)

read

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

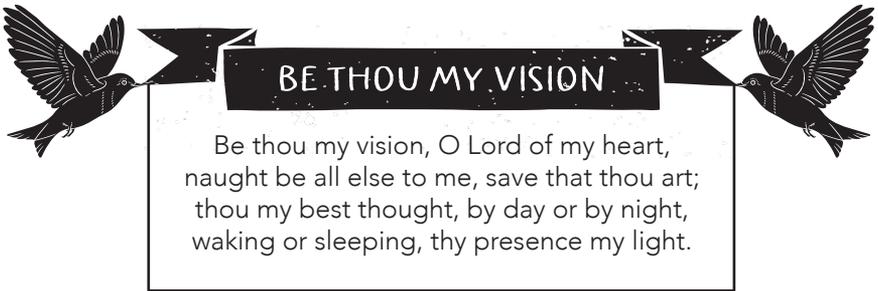
Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. + Matthew 6:19-21

sing

"Be Thou My Vision"

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

"Pass It On"



reflect

For Jesus, it's not only our actions that count (our giving, our praying, our practicing) – it's also our disposition, the spirit of what we do and why we're doing it. This creates a dilemma: doing a good thing (say, being generous) creates a temptation to boast ("Look how generous I am!"); and yet even humble, quiet generosity can lead to its own kind of pride ("Wow, I'm so humble!"). What to do?

One strategy is to ask God's Spirit to dwell and act in us, with us, and through us, so that pride in our actions is replaced by gratitude to God – and that's exactly what "Be Thou My Vision" is all about. It's an Irish song traditionally dated to the sixth century (though scholars put it a couple of centuries later – but it's still one of the oldest songs we'll ever sing!). The lyrics ask God to be our vision, wisdom, word, heart, and so on, a kind of head-to-toe communion in which we turn away from "vain empty praise" and toward God as our true "treasure."



pray

Extinguish one of the eight candles.

In this world so full of ashes, God of new life, dwell in us this Lenten season, walk with us, put our hearts in the right place as we give, pray, and serve. Fill us with so much gratitude there's no room left for boasting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- After singing each song, reflect and discuss: What thoughts and emotions does this song provoke for you? What other songs does it bring to mind? (Sing them!) Start a list – or a playlist! – of songs for this Lenten season.
- For example, the African American spiritual, "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me," with its themes of sorrow, struggle, accompaniment, and hope, is perfect for the 40-day pilgrimage of Lent. "Pass It On" is a classic campfire song; try singing it near a fire or by candlelight (channeling the the spirit of the late 1960s, when it was written!), and let its second verse evoke Lent's deep connections with spring.
- Take a "music walk," singing (or humming) one of this week's songs, and notice how it changes both the song and the walk. What do you see as you ask God to "be your vision"? What do you feel as you ask Jesus to "walk with me," or witness "what a wondrous time is spring"?
- Conversation Starter: What changes do you hope for this Lent as you give, pray, and practice? In what ways would you like to be more generous, more humble, more gracious, more kind?

first sunday of lent

light

Light seven of the eight candles

read

LUKE 4:1-13

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" + Luke 4:4



sing

"Just a Closer Walk with Thee"

"Spirit of the Living God"

"My Life Flows On"

A decorative graphic featuring two birds in flight, one on the left and one on the right, flanking a central banner. The banner has a dark background with white text. Below the banner is a white box containing a prayer.

**JUST A CLOSER WALK
WITH THEE**

I am weak, but thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
as I walk, let me walk close to thee.

reflect

In this story from Luke, Jesus is given three tests, each tempting him to turn away from trusting God and toward trusting himself alone. Jesus refuses by repeatedly quoting the story of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, fed by God with daily provisions of manna – quotes that underscore his humble commitment to relying on God for nourishment, strength, and security, just as the Israelites were called to do (see Deuteronomy 8:3). As the Child of Humanity, Jesus humbly trusts God, as if singing, "as I walk, let me walk, close to thee."

An African American gospel song, “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” also became a jazz standard, and in particular, a classic within the New Orleans jazz tradition. Its roots may go back to the nineteenth century, but it wasn’t published until 1940, and since then, hundreds of artists have recorded it. It’s become an iconic musical expression of intimate trust and companionship with God, even and especially in a world full of “toil and snares.”



pray

Extinguish another candle.

In this world of toil and snares, God of wisdom, deepen our trust in you. Help us to walk with you through the tumult and the strife. Teach us, nurture us, mold us into the people you created us to be, walking closely and humbly with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- Continue to build your Lenten list of songs. “Spirit of the Living God” – written in 1926 by a Presbyterian pastor, Daniel Iverson – is a simple, memorable exploration of the idea with which Luke begins this famous story: “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...” Likewise, “My Life Flows On” – with lyrics from an 1868 poem by “Pauline T.” – provides a sense of what it’s like to remain poised “through all the tumult and the strife.”
- If you’ve chosen to fast from something during Lent, sing one of this week’s songs whenever you feel tempted to break the fast.
- Conversation Starter: When does your trust in God feel most “tested”? When do you feel most anxious, or most tempted to trust in your own efforts alone? Jesus responded to these feelings by remembering the story of the Israelites’ 40 years in the wilderness, reframing his experience as an opportunity to learn how to more deeply, humbly trust in God. Might our 40 days of Lent serve a similar purpose?
- Take a “closer walk” this week, through your neighborhood or along a favorite trail, meditating on God’s nearness and companionship. Sing, hum, or contemplate this week’s songs as you go.

- Communing with God sometimes takes the form of showing up and serving where God has promised to be: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the prisoner (Matthew 25). This week, volunteer some time, talent, and/or treasure with a local organization walking closely with God in one or more of these ways.
- **More Singing, Please:** Try "Go Down, Moses" for a connection to the ancient story of the Israelites' journey out of slavery into the wilderness; "God of Grace and God of Glory" for a stirring prayer for the wisdom and courage we need when we're tested; and "What Does the Lord Require of You?" for a reminder of our call to kindness, justice, and humbly walking with God.

second sunday of lent

light

Light six of the eight candles

read

LUKE 13:31-35

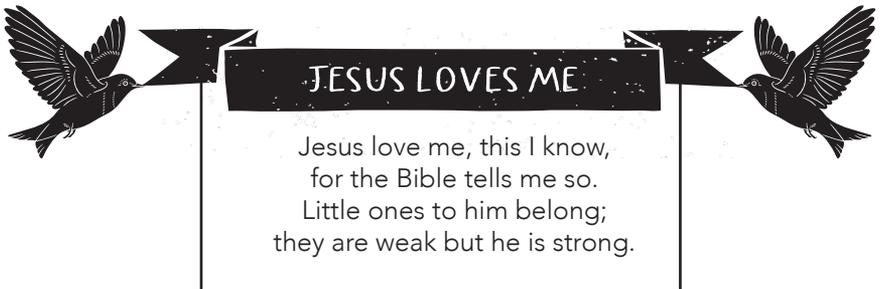
"How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" + Luke 13:34

sing

"Jesus Loves Me"

"My Shepherd, You Supply My Need" (or "My Shepherd Is the Living God")

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"



reflect

In this story from Luke, Jesus compares himself to a mother hen, gathering her chicks under her wings, nurturing and protecting them. And yet, in Jerusalem – and everywhere else, too – we often reject prophets (think of Martin Luther King, Jr., for example), or ignore them, or romanticize them, and thereby dismiss them. In the same way, Jesus is rejected in the story of the cross – but even so, God’s desire to love and care for all of us remains.

“Jesus Loves Me” is powerful for at least three reasons: first, its accessibility to all ages in virtually all places, now translated into hundreds of languages; second, for many, its emotional connection to childhood (and thus to being “children of God” at any age); and third, its distillation of the Gospel. One of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century, Karl Barth, was once asked what he learned in all of his theological studies, and he replied by quoting this song’s first two lines. Those lines were written in 1860 by Anna B. Warner and her sister, Susan; in one of the novels they wrote together, the song comforts a sick child – sheltering the child, we might say, beneath God’s wings.



pray

Extinguish another candle.

In this world so full of vulnerability, God of love, help us to care for each other. Forgive us when we turn away, ignore, or romanticize your prophets; help us to hear them instead, and change our lives. Comfort the lonely, and let us be instruments of that comfort. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Chickens have a rich repertoire of sounds, a hymnal of sorts: clucking soft lullabies to their chicks, rumbling lament for a lost companion, crowing in triumph, calling out in times of danger. In their world and ours, sound and singing give voice to emotion and experience through the ages. All God's creatures have a place in the choir!



activities

- Continue to build your Lenten list. Thomas Dorsey (who played piano for the blues singer, Ma Rainey) wrote “Precious Lord” in 1932, after the deaths of his wife, Nettie, and their newborn child; it’s a lovely, plaintive cry, and singing it can help us carry each other’s burdens. And in 1791, Isaac Watts wrote a paraphrase of Psalm 23 (itself a song, of course!) that serves as the basis of “My Shepherd, You Supply My Need” (see also “My Shepherd Is the Living God” for slightly different lyrics), later collected in the 1835 shape-note hymnal, *The Southern Harmony*. Just as a mother hen cares for all her chicks, and a shepherd for the whole flock, God loves each and every one of us, bar none.
- Place a small feather in a spot you’ll see often this week, a soft reminder of God’s protective care, like a mother hen gathering her chicks.
- Conversation Starter: Where in your life, or where in creation, do you most strongly sense the “wings” of God’s care? And what prophetic challenges – to be kind, just, humble, peaceful, or caring toward creation, to name a few – would you like to manifest in your life this week, this Lent, and beyond?
- Try “singing in solidarity” this week: sing “Precious Lord” with those who are mourning, “My Shepherd” with those who are feeling grateful, and “Jesus Loves Me” with those who are sick (see the Reflect section above).
- Singing can be a kind of prayer, and also a kind of gift. This week, reach out to someone you love who is sad, or sick, or longs for a sense of God’s love – and let them know you’re thinking of them, and that you’ve sung “Precious Lord,” “My Shepherd,” or “Jesus Loves Me” (or all three!) in their honor.
- **More Singing, Please:** Try “Softly and Tenderly” for a sense of Jesus’ tender care; and “Thuma Mina” for a South African song of intimacy with God.



third sunday of lent

light

Light five of the eight candles

read

LUKE 13:1-9

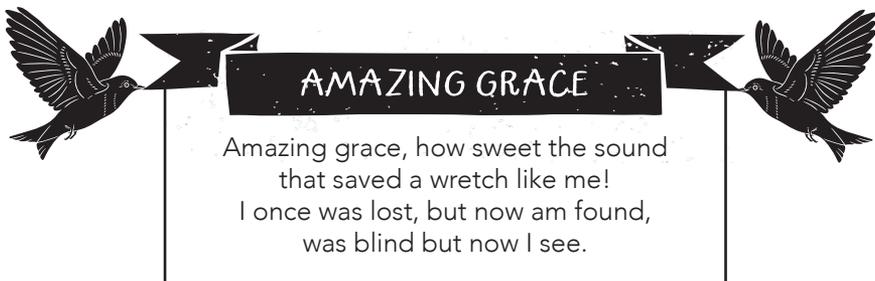
"He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" + Luke 13:8-9

sing

"Amazing Grace"

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

"Come Thou Font of Every Blessing"



reflect

In this parable from Luke, Jesus suggests that each person, and each community, is like a tree made to "bear fruit" of kindness and justice. Jesus compares the situation to a farmer preparing to cut a tree down when it fails to bear fruit. The gardener intervenes, and requests one more year; with some tender loving care, the tree may yet bear fruit. It's not too late! God is faithful and merciful – and no matter what we have done in the past, God calls us toward a more kind, just future.

Amidst so much “eye for an eye” retribution, God’s mercy is simply astonishing – and music can help enliven our amazement. God doesn’t embrace us because of our excellence, but rather despite our failings. In short, God “saved a wretch like me,” as the famous hymn puts it, written in 1779 by John Newton, a former slave trader, and fifty years later set to an Appalachian folk tune. And if God embraces us despite our failings, then surely God loves all of us – our enemies no less than our friends – with the same sweet, amazing grace.



pray

Extinguish another candle.

In this world so full of severity, God of mercy, thank you for always giving us another year. Inspire and enliven us to be who we are. Free those trapped by shame, or paralyzed by doubt – and make us instruments of your encouragement and care. In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- Continue building your Lenten list. “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy,” written in 1854, compares divine mercy to “the wideness of the sea” – a scope we can scarcely comprehend. And in “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (like “Amazing Grace,” set to an old American folk tune), we sing of God’s “streams of mercy, never ceasing.”
- End each day by singing one of this week’s songs as a prayerful little lullaby before bed.
- Conversation Starter: Are you as forgiving of yourself and others as God is with you? How would you like to become more merciful, more graceful, more free?
- “Amazing Grace” is an amazing song: try playing it on a piano, using only the black keys (hint: start with C#); the entire song can be played with those five black notes! And try singing it in a round, with the second singer(s) starting immediately after the first sings, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound”...

- Songs of mercy call for works of mercy: sing a song by phone or online (or leave a voicemail) to someone far away who could use a pick-me-up; or form a small group of singers to offer some music in a hospital, nursing home, or shelter.
- **More Singing, Please:** Try “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” for a celebration of God’s mercy; “178 Africa” for William Billings’ shape-note tune from 1770, with words by Isaac Watts from 1709; and “For the Beauty of the Earth” for a song of gratitude to God for so mercifully providing a world of blessings – including mercy itself, “all gentle thoughts and mild.”

fourth sunday of lent

light

Light four of the eight candles



read

LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32

“But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; was lost and has been found.” + Luke 15:32

sing

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

“He Came Down”

“I’ve Got Peace Like a River”

**JOYFUL, JOYFUL,
WE ADORE THEE**

Joyful, joyful we adore thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee,
opening to the sun above.

reflect

In this story from Luke, Jesus tells a parable of two brothers and their gracious, generous father. When the younger brother comes home after wasting his inheritance in dissolute living, the father welcomes him with open arms, and holds a lavish party to celebrate his return. The older brother, who's stayed home, is envious and angry: Why should this scoundrel – and not me – get a party? The father responds by urging the older brother to join the celebration. Jesus told this parable to religious leaders who, like the story's older brother, were angry that Jesus seemed to be welcoming disreputable people into the circle of God's love.

At its heart, this parable is about how certain kinds of moralism – keeping accounts of who's deserving and who's undeserving – can become hindrances to experiencing joy. A quintessential hymn to joy (and at its best, a taste of jubilation itself) is "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," with lyrics from 1907 set to Beethoven's music from 1824, itself inspired by a German poem about joy. Indeed, joy's ecstasy transcends moralism, focusing instead on the beloved's presence, like a parent rejoicing in a child's return with a great party, great food – and great music!



pray

Extinguish another candle.

In this world so full of sorrow, God of joy, help us to celebrate each other's dignity, and forgive each other's failings. Gladden the hearts of the angry and envious, the downtrodden and brokenhearted – and let us be agents of joy in all we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- For your Lenten list: "He Came Down," a traditional song from Cameroon, celebrates that Jesus came – and the Spirit comes – so that "we may have joy." And "I've Got Peace Like a River," an intergenerational, interactive gem, casts joy as a kind of "fountain in my soul."
- Try singing one of your list's songs as a sung prayer before every meal this week.

- Conversation Starter: Which character in the parable do you most identify with? The younger sibling? The older one? Do you have enough joy and celebration in your life? What obstacles do you notice?
- Create a "Joy Playlist," a list of songs that put an undeniable spring in your step, and listen to it every day this week. Compare notes with a friend or family member: what songs give your loved ones joy, and why?
- Throw a party this week for no reason other than each other's presence. Choose particular means of joy – cupcakes? a favorite dish? a favorite song? – tailor-made for each person.
- **More Singing, Please:** Try "This Is the Day," a reminder that every day is a work of art and a gift from the artist; and "Joy to the World" (yep, that one!) for a song that Isaac Watts wrote not only for Christmas, but also for the many other ways Christ comes, and will yet come, to be with us.

fifth sunday of lent

light

Light three of the eight candles

read

JOHN 12:1-8

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial." + John 12:7

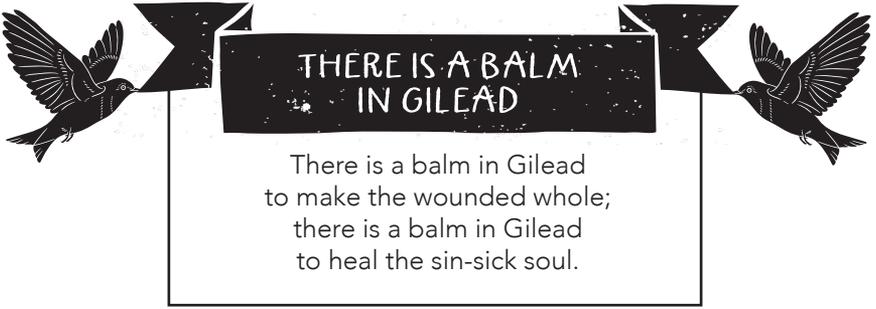
sing

"There Is a Balm in Gilead"

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"

"Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended"





reflect

We're approaching Jesus' death – but only Lazarus' sister, Mary, seems to realize it. She softly anoints Jesus' feet with perfume, as if preparing his body for burial. Judas scolds her for not selling the perfume and donating the money to the poor, but Jesus defends her: she has understood what everyone else has missed. Jesus is about to be tortured and killed, and so his body should be treated with tenderness and honor. And perhaps Mary glimpsed even more: not just the coming death, but the coming resurrection, too, the rising into new life.

In any case, she anticipates his ordeal with a fine, beautiful balm. In the African American spiritual, "There Is a Balm in Gilead," the anonymous author answers the prophet Jeremiah's lament, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" (Jeremiah 8:22). We may well ask the same today: "Is there no balm? No tenderness and honor? No healing? No hope?" And the song answers: *Yes, there is – take heart. Even on the eve of the journey to the cross, there is a balm in Gilead...*



pray

Extinguish another candle.

In this broken world, God of tenderness, help us to care for each other, and for creation. Give us the balm we need, along with the gentleness and compassion to apply it. Comfort the afflicted, heal the wounded, and make us instruments of your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- For your Lenten list: Following Mary's lead, "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" lets us anticipate Jesus' imminent ordeal. The lyrics derive from a Latin poem attributed to the twelfth-century Benedictine abbot and mystic, Bernard of Clairvaux, and the tune is from 1601, picked up later by J.S. Bach in his St. Matthew's Passion (fun fact: Paul Simon based his song, "American Tune," in part on this melody). And likewise, the lyrics from "Ah, Holy Jesus" go all the way back to the eleventh century. Think of these lovely, aching, tender songs, echoing down through the generations, both anticipating sorrow and offering a balm.
- Take a familiar tune from your list (like "Amazing Grace") and write new lyrics that reflect your Lenten journey thus far.
- Conversation Starter: How do you want your body to be treated when you die? Have you ever experienced someone close to you dying? What was it like? Does it make a difference to you that Jesus, too, experienced suffering and death?
- Wear a touch of perfume or cologne this week, to help you remember Mary's act of gentleness and honor – and also to anticipate that Holy Week is next week.
- Jesus' passion isn't only about looking at his suffering and death; it's also about looking *through* them as lenses for more clearly seeing the suffering and death in the world. Looking ahead to Holy Week, volunteer some time, talent, and/or treasure to an organization devoted to alleviating suffering or comforting those approaching death.
- **More Singing, Please:** Try "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley" to anticipate his walk along the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrows; and "Nearer, My God, To Thee" for a meditation on God's companionship, even and especially in times of suffering and death.



palm sunday

light

Light all eight candles

read

LUKE 19:28-40

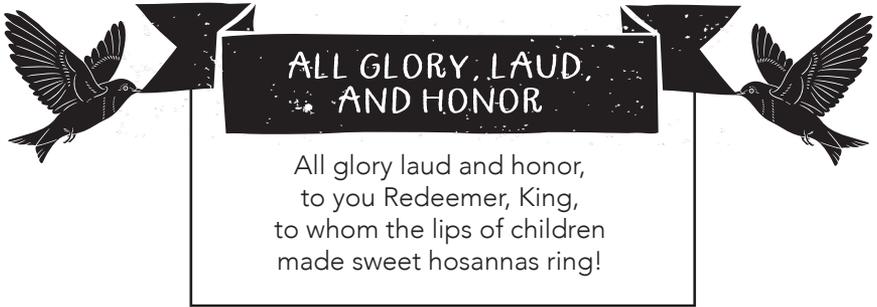
"Jesus answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'" + Luke 19:40

sing

"All Glory, Laud, and Honor"

"Prepare Ye"

"All Creatures of Our God and King"



reflect

In this story from Luke, Palm Sunday is a day of hopeful joy. On the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus brings to life an ancient prophecy: a triumphant, peaceful king, "humble and riding on a donkey," arrives in the holy city (Zechariah 9:9). Large crowds join in, waving palm branches and shouting "Hosanna!" (which means, "Save us!") – it's almost as though creation's choir itself is quickening. As Jesus puts it, if the crowds were to fall silent, "the stones would shout out!"

“All Glory, Laud, and Honor” can help us step into this spirit of praise and anticipation. The words go back to a ninth-century French bishop, imprisoned by the king – but released, the story goes, when the king heard him singing this hymn in his cell. The song links our hosannas with those that day in Jerusalem, collapsing time and space, and by the same token, implicating us in the events soon to follow, as Holy Week unfolds.



Leave the eight candles lit.

In this world of too much despair, God of hope, fill us with your Spirit. Help us to sing hosannas, to trust in you, and to hear creation's choir, even now, singing your praises and believing your promises. *Hosanna, hosanna in the highest!* In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- For your Lenten list: “Prepare Ye” is a simple, lively anthem (from *Godspell*), perfect for waving branches while raising our voices; and “All Creatures of Our God and King,” with words by St. Francis of Assisi in 1225, resonates with Jesus’ idea that even “the stones would shout out.” Some churches refrain from singing “Alleluia” during Lent, but Palm Sunday (and “All Creatures” in particular) can be a great way to anticipate the Easter alleluias to come.
- Conversation Starter: If Palm Sunday is a day of hopeful, anticipatory joy, what are you most hopeful about these days? What do you long for? What signs of change would bring you out into the streets to sing?
- Palm Sunday gets its name from an ancient tradition of waving branches as a sign of celebration – an ancient link, it turns out, to the liberation of the exodus story, when the Israelites flee from Egyptian bondage into the wilderness, where they live under makeshift tents made with branches. So get outside under the branches, and begin a weeklong meditation on what bonds you need liberation from this year.
- **More Singing, Please:** Try “Let the Whole Creation Cry” for another nod to the cosmic choir all around us, and “This Little Light of Mine” to remember your shining place within it.

maundy thursday

light

Light two of the eight candles

read

JOHN 13:1-35

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. + John 13:5

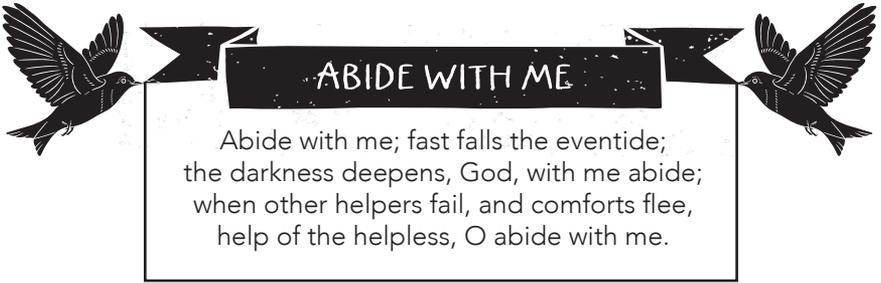


sing

"Abide with Me"

"Lead Me, Guide Me"

"Stay with Me"

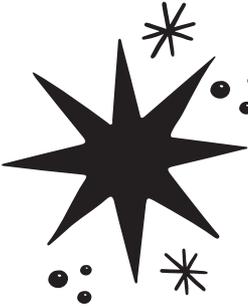


Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens, God, with me abide;
when other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
help of the helpless, O abide with me.

reflect

Lazarus' sister, Mary, has just anointed Jesus' feet with perfume – and now Jesus turns to his disciples. By washing their feet, he shows them what he means by "love one another, as I have loved you" (that's why we call this Thursday "Maundy," from an old word for "mandate" or command). The act is an icon of a new world: children of God, created in the image of God, serving one another with gentleness and grace. Distraught, the disciples don't want Jesus to leave, and he responds, in effect: *Don't worry – I will be with you, in and through acts of love.*

And this love, of course, is the opposite of what the next day will bring: betrayal, mockery, and suffering. Later that very night, Jesus struggles in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking his disciples, and then asking God, to abide with him. "Abide with Me" can help us feel and imagine each of these dimensions: the disciples' pleading with Jesus to stay, Jesus asking the disciples to stay, Jesus asking God to guide him – and each of us, too, asking God to "abide with me."



pray

Extinguish another candle.

In this world so full of struggle, God of gentleness, help us to care for each other in simple, clear, gentle ways, loving others as you have loved us. Abide with all who suffer – and grant us the grace to abide with each other. In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- For your Lenten list: "Lead Me, Guide Me" – written in 1953 by the African American Roman Catholic hymn writer, Doris Akers – can triple as a song we sing today, a song we imagine the disciples singing to Jesus, and a song we imagine Jesus singing in Gethsemane. Likewise, the Taizé song "Stay with Me" can help us imagine Jesus' struggle in the garden, asking his disciples to stay awake and keep him company.
- Write a favorite lyric (or a word from a lyric) on the palm of your hand, as a quiet reminder throughout the day. Before you go to bed, wash it off with warm water.
- Conversation Starter: With Jesus' call to "love one another, as I have loved you" in mind, what tangible, gentle forms of love would you like to embody in the coming days, months, and beyond? Personally? Locally? Globally?



good friday



light

Light one of the eight candles

read

JOHN 18:1 – 19:42

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. + John 19:30

sing

"What Wondrous Love Is This"

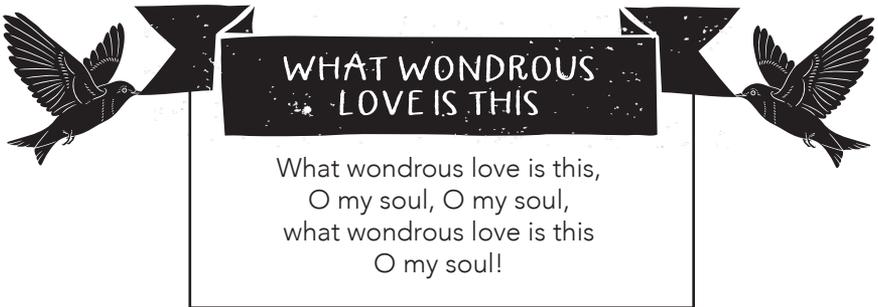
"Were You There?"

"Jesus, Remember Me"

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

"When Jesus Wept"

"Senzeni Na"



reflect

Jesus' passion and death represent one of the great mysteries of Christian faith, and our ancestors have seen fit to affirm multiple avenues of interpretation and levels of meaning. One way to explore these avenues and levels is to sing a range of songs that circle around the mystery, letting the words and tunes open up different doors for reflection.

For example, the old Appalachian folk hymn, "What Wondrous Love is This," creates a haunting, mournful sense of awe. The African American spiritual, "Were You There?", immerses us in the action, as does the Taizé song, "Jesus, Remember Me," quoting the thief on the cross beside Jesus. Isaac Watts' 1770 lyrics to "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" offer yet another kind of poetry, as does William Billings' "When Jesus Wept" from the same year, a song that can be sung as a round. "Senzeni Na" is a stirring South African cry of lament: the title translates to "What have we done [to deserve this anguish]?" Taken together, these songs – and many more – help illuminate and enliven the great mystery, each one complementing the others.



pray

Extinguish another candle.

In this world so full of suffering, God of love, help us to comfort each other. Give us the courage to feel our sorrow, face our complicity, change our lives, and move toward reconciliation and repair. In Jesus' name, Amen.

activities

- Music holds memories. Share a favorite hymn and a memory that, for you, is associated with it. Invite others to do the same, and sing a verse together after each memory.
- Find a time and place today and tomorrow for silent prayer.
- Share a favorite Lenten song with a friend and ask them to share one with you. Sing each other's songs this weekend, letting it become a prayer for your friend and for the world.



easter sunday

light

Light eight candles, along with a few more candles, some flowers, artwork, favorite treats – anything that helps us welcome the good news of Easter with hope and joy!

read

LUKE 24:1-12

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” + Luke 24:5

sing

“Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”

“How Great Thou Art”

“Siyahamba”

“The Strife is O’er”

“In the Garden”

“Now the Green Blade Rises”



reflect

Jesus is risen – alleluia! The 40 days of Lent draw to a close – and the season of Eastertide begins, a 50-day Sabbath, a festival of resurrection, of new life, of beginning again.

Charles Wesley’s “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,” from 1739, rings out from one direction; “How Great Thou Art,” based on a Swedish folk melody in 1953, rings out from another. “We Are Walking/Siyahamba/Caminando” lets us sing in English, Zulu, and Spanish, while “The Strife is O’er” comes from a seventeenth-century Latin poem. “I Come to the Garden Alone,” from 1912, is sung from the perspective of Mary Magdalene, and “Now the Green Blade Rises,” from 1928, is an Easter lyric set to the tune of an ancient French Christmas carol, a lovely, evocative connection between Christianity’s two great feasts.

Stirring and reflective, epic and jubilant, these songs – and so many more!
– help us feel, understand, and celebrate the good news of the Gospel:

♪ Lift up your voice! ♪



notes



Check out our Spotify playlist (QR code below) that includes many of these songs, plus a few more for the season.



SPOTIFY
PLAYLIST

Check out our "Lyrics and Links" doc (QR code below) for song lyrics and links to performances



LYRICS AND
LINKS DOC

events

