

Week 3

MARCH 7-13, 2021

Dry bones come to life

by Roger Gench



HYMN OF THE WEEK: "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"


PRAYER FOCUS: Adoration — Consider the praiseworthy qualities of God. How can I praise God's majesty and glory in my words and in my actions?


ACTION: Each day, reach out to someone (by letter, text, phone or email) and say, "I care about you" or "Let's have a coffee date by phone and catch up."

Sunday, MARCH 7, 2021

PSALM 23

For the next three days, we will pray with Scripture that can help us reflect on our graced histories — that is, on your personal history of *light* (special experiences of God's presence, love and justice), your personal history of *shadows* (doubts, questions, reflections of brokenness and sin), and your history of *light out of shadows* (compassion and insight out of pain and disorder, isolation).

 **Practice:** Pray Psalm 23 with special attention to your *light* history — that is, to experiences of God's presence in your life (experiences of love, care, hope, justice). Gently sift through your light history from your childhood to the present, moment noting varied experiences of God's presence along the way.

 **Journal:** Sketch in your journal as much of this personal history of light as possible.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT.



Monday, MARCH 8, 2021

EZEKIEL 37:1-3

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones can help us reflect on the *shadows* in our personal histories.



Practice: Read today's passage and imagine surveying the dry bones of your life story – that is, times of suffering, betrayal or lost relations – times when you were keenly aware of your own brokenness and that of the world. Gently sift through your shadow history from your childhood to present, noting varied experiences of brokenness along the way.



Journal: Sketch in your journal as much of your personal history of brokenness as possible.

Tuesday, MARCH 9, 2021

EZEKIEL 37:4-10

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones can also help us ponder our personal history of *light out of shadows*.



Practice: As you pray with today's vision from Ezekiel, imagine the breath of God infusing the dry bones of your life. Remember the times when you sensed hope, justice or love emerging from the difficult moments of your life. Gently sift through your *light out of shadows* history from childhood to the present, noting varied experiences of God's presence along the way.



Journal: Sketch in your journal as much of this personal history of *light out of shadows* as possible.

Wednesday, MARCH 10, 2021

MARK 4:1-9

Jesus' parable of the sower in Mark 4 prompts reflection on how we have responded differently – and at varied times in our lives – to the gospel. The seed from the sower falls in varied places: on the path, the rocky ground, among the thorns and into good soil. If time and interest allows, you might also read Jesus' interpretation of the parable of the sower in Mark 4:13-20.



Practice: Read Mark 4:1-9 slowly and prayerfully, and imagine that you are part of this scene, observing the sower of seeds. Imagine the seeds falling in varied places or situations in your life. What circumstances come to mind, and what thoughts or emotions emerge as you consider your own life story in conversation with this parable?



Journal: Note in your journal what emerged as you prayed with this Scripture.

Thursday, MARCH 11, 2021

ISAIAH 42:1-9

The figure in this “Servant Song” from Isaiah 42 is generally thought to represent the people of Israel who are called by God to bring forth justice among the nations. Note especially the powerful image of how the servant goes about the work of justice: “a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.”



Practice: Prayerfully read these verses two or three times, noting the images that shimmer for you and the reflection they evoke.



Journal: Write in your journal of movements toward God or away from God that emerge into view.

Friday, MARCH 12, 2021

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

This passage at the heart of Philippians has been described as Paul’s “master story” of God and the world. As such, note how the text presents God’s movement toward us — a movement of decidedly “downward mobility” in which God’s own self is emptied in Christ in order to transform, redeem and liberate the world. This divine movement of love toward the world, in the world, with the world, and for the world is the very power of God.



Practice: Prayerfully read this text several times, noting the images that shine for you.



Journal: Write in you journal of movement toward God or away from God that you discern.

Saturday, MARCH 13, 2021

MARK 1:4-11

The story of Jesus’ baptism in the wilderness is an occasion on which to remember our own baptisms — even if we were infants at the time and were scarcely aware of what was happening. Mark tells us that when Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were “ripped apart” — they did not simply “open,” because something that opens can close. The heavens were ripped apart, which is to say that reality was irreparably altered as a fissure in the heavens appeared — a permanent elimination of the boundary between heaven and earth. God’s Spirit, in other words, is loose in the world and in our lives.



Practice: Pray this Scripture with special attention to the powerful images in this text, and as you ponder Jesus’ baptism, also remember your own. Imagine God’s voice identifying and claiming you as a beloved child of God and the vision of the heavens ripped apart. Reflect on the significance of these revelatory events for Jesus’ life, your own life and the life of the world.



Journal: Note in your journal what emerges in your prayerful reflection on Jesus’ baptism and your own.

As a Lenten devotional discipline this year, you are invited to pray with Scripture as a way of discerning what God is calling you to be and to do during this season.

John Calvin spoke of the Bible as the “lens of faith,” likening it to a pair of eyeglasses that enables us to see the world with clearer vision as God’s creation. As theologian Serene Jones notes in “Inhabiting Scripture, Dreaming Bible” (a chapter in “Engaging Biblical Authority”), this was Calvin’s way of saying that Scripture “brings clarity and focus to all aspects of our lives” and “lets us see what we otherwise would not.” In short, once we have these eyeglasses on, “there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that escapes their vision-framing power.”

PRACTICES:



- **Scripture as prayer:** One of the ways we can “put on” Scripture is by praying or meditating contemplatively on a biblical text — slowly and contemplatively reading it as a prayer to God. Indeed, this is an ancient and robust practice of prayer. When we pray with Scripture, we ponder deeply the words and images of the text. Using our imaginations, we can even enter into the world of the text in order to discern God’s wisdom.



- **Movement of God:** Praying with Scripture in this way can be an aid – a focusing lens – to help us discern the movement of God in our personal lives and in the life of the world around us. Throughout the season of Lent, you will be invited to pray with one passage from Scripture each day and prompted to reflect on what it is disclosing to you about *movement toward God* and *movement away from God* in your life.



- **Prayer journal:** You may find it helpful to keep a journal in which you briefly note what surfaces in your prayer time, so that over the course of the Lenten journey you can track the movements of God’s Spirit in your midst. Also, consider the *prayer focus* of the week as you journal and pray.



- **Bringing the Bible and hymns to life:** Each week, a *hymn* will be suggested for worship and reflection. During your devotional time each day, read the words (or sing or play the hymn!) and reflect on the truths the text reveals to you. (If you don’t have a hymnal, you can Google the hymn or visit hymnary.org.) Likewise, consider the *action* prompt each day and note how the Spirit nudges you to fulfill it.