

Introduction

In most of our Sioux Falls LCMS congregations this year, we will be rotating our pastors in a round-robin style schedule. Each preacher will bring a different message from the Gospel of John revolving around one of the many “I Am” statements Jesus made about Himself. Alpha and Omega, Living Water, Light of the World, The Door, The Vine, The Way, the Truth, and the Life, Bread of Life, Good Shepherd, Resurrection and Life, and just plain “I Am” are the themes that will be explored as our Lord speaks to us on Wednesdays in February and March.

Additionally, the elders have sent out bookmarks with daily Scripture readings for each household. Pastor Aker and Pastor Janneke will publish brief devotions each week based on the day’s Scripture reading for your use in your personal or family devotions.

We pray that as our congregation reads, studies, and worships together, that together we would grow in our faith. There is nothing more important and no Word more powerful than the voice of our dear Lord speaking to us. To each household, the Lord provides parents to be His mouthpiece of grace. Parents are given the awesome task of raising their children in the faith. As we grow and leave the household in which we’re raised, the responsibility of staying in the Word and making sure we are regularly nourished falls upon ourselves. Pick up your Lord’s Word, the very thing St. Paul calls the Sword of the Spirit, and prepare for battle! To that end, we pray the Lord bless and keep you in the true faith. May He refresh you this Lenten season.

+ Soli Gloria Dei +

Ash Wednesday

Genesis 12:1-3

February 14

Ashes, Hearts, and a New People

In you all the nations of the earth will be blessed. (Genesis 12:3)

At this point in the relationship, everything was rainbows and butterflies. Abraham was found faithful. No problems. No issues. Just God and His chosen man. Before long, one became two, and then two became twelve, and twelve became a great nation. Over time, the hearts of the people turned from their first and true love. Other gods. Other interests. So far did they fall away from the Lord God that He was about to wipe them out forever. As angry as the Lord became with them, He never stopped loving them. As faithless as they would become, the Lord remained faithful. Nothing would come between them, not even sin! Many years later, it was through the lineage of these very people that God has brought forth Jesus, the Savior, through Whom all people on earth are blessed. Jesus, to whom we look and find again the Lord’s favor and grace. The ashes spread upon our heads remind us both of our sins **and** of God’s faithfulness to us through Christ! You are His!

Gracious Lord, let our hearts never wander from you. Amen.

Thursday

Genesis 15:1-6

February 15

You Need a Shield!

“Fear not, Abram, I am your shield.” (Genesis 15:1)

The Lord had just proved to Abraham that He could powerfully shield him from danger and evil. (You can read more about Abraham’s adventures in Genesis 14.) Genesis 15:1 is not the only place in Scripture in which God describes Himself as His people’s Shield. Psalms 3:3 & 28:7 are two of many instances in which God’s Word promises His shielding presence for you. As long as you live in this world of sin, you will need a Shield! Until the day of Christ’s return, the Church must rely on Him to shield us from “the devil, the world, and our sinful nature [that they] may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.” (Luther’s Small Catechism) Astoundingly, Christ laid aside His own “shield” and came to share our human flesh and weakness. The devil, the world, and our sins did their worst to Him on Good Friday, but nevertheless, He rose in victory for us on the third day. You need a Shield, and you have one: Christ Jesus!

Jesus, shield me from temptation and danger. Amen.

Friday

Genesis 22:9-18

February 16

A Call to Faith and Trust

Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. (Genesis 22:10)

The question is before us: why? This was a test of Abraham's faithfulness. See, we can say all day long we trust the Lord, but when everything is on the line, do our actions confess what our words say? The better question from this passage: do I trust the Lord? Answer: sometimes. If we're honest we can clearly see within ourselves many times in which we do not trust; in which we lose faith. This is the very definition of sin. In fact, every sin you have ever committed is a result of your lack of trust in the Lord. Jesus trusts in His Father completely. Refusing to turn stones to bread when He was starving to death, He trusted His Father's care. Facing His impending suffering and death, He trusted His Father and submitted to the crucifixion. Resting secure in the hands of His Father, Jesus refused to leave the cross, but bore its full punishment. This trust is righteousness. This righteousness is given you!

Teach us to trust you, O Father. Amen.

Saturday

Galatians 3:7-9

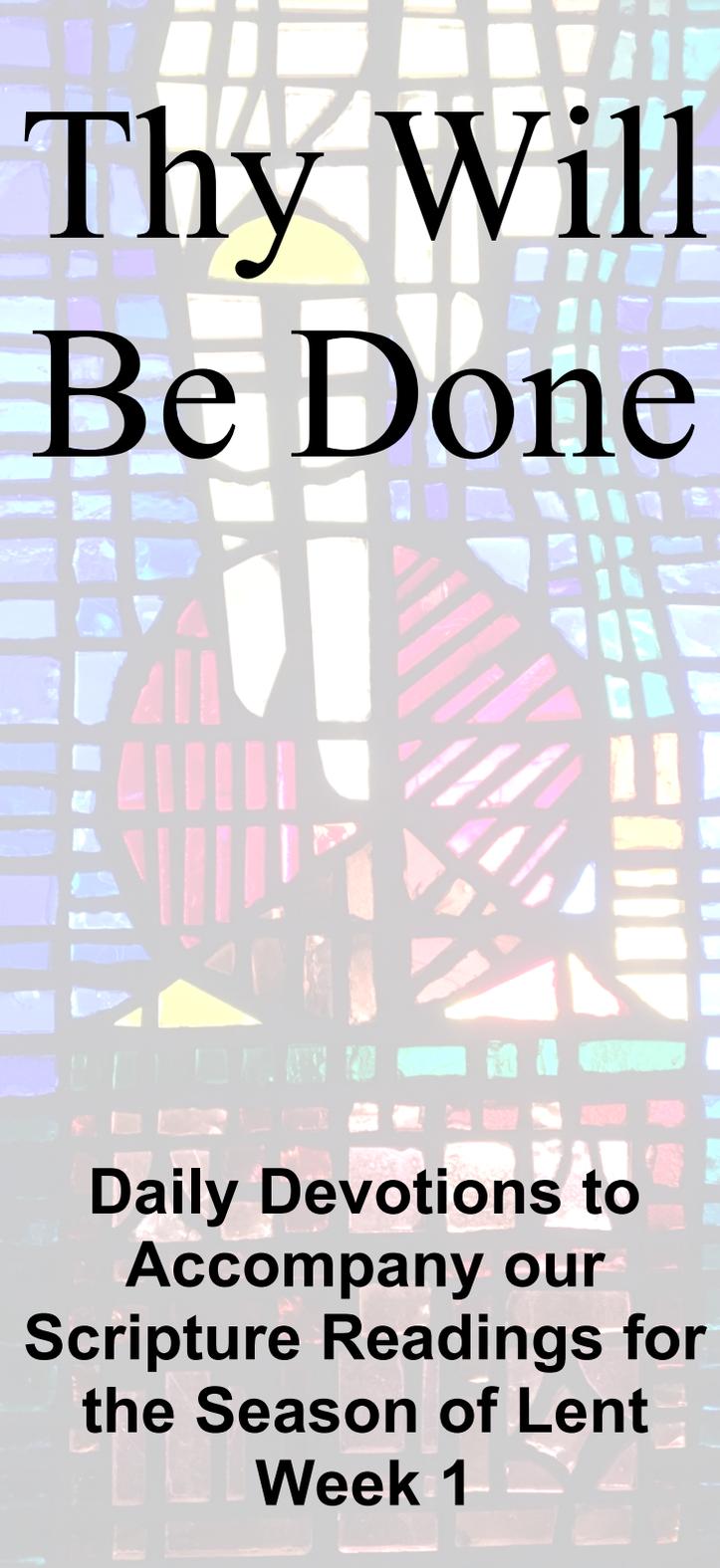
February 17

Sons of Abraham

"It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." (Galatians 3:7)

It's one thing to say that you'll be a blessing to your family or community, but for God to promise that Abraham would be a blessing to all the nations is incredible! But the story of God shows how He is continuing to fulfill that great promise He made to Abraham. God expanded His people of faith from a little handful to a big family, and from one nation to all the nations! Today, God's faithful ones include people from every part of the globe. They speak languages like English and Spanish and Amharic (an Ethiopian dialect) and Kunama (an Eritrean dialect). Through His Word and Spirit, the Lord has gifted not only you but countless brothers and sisters in Christ with saving faith. By faith in God's promises, you are a child of Abraham, and even better, a child of God! Just as your Lord graciously justified Abraham by faith (declared him righteous in God's sight), He has done the same for you.

God of Abraham, thank you for being my Savior and the Savior of all who trust in You. Amen.



Thy Will Be Done

**Daily Devotions to
Accompany our
Scripture Readings for
the Season of Lent
Week 1**