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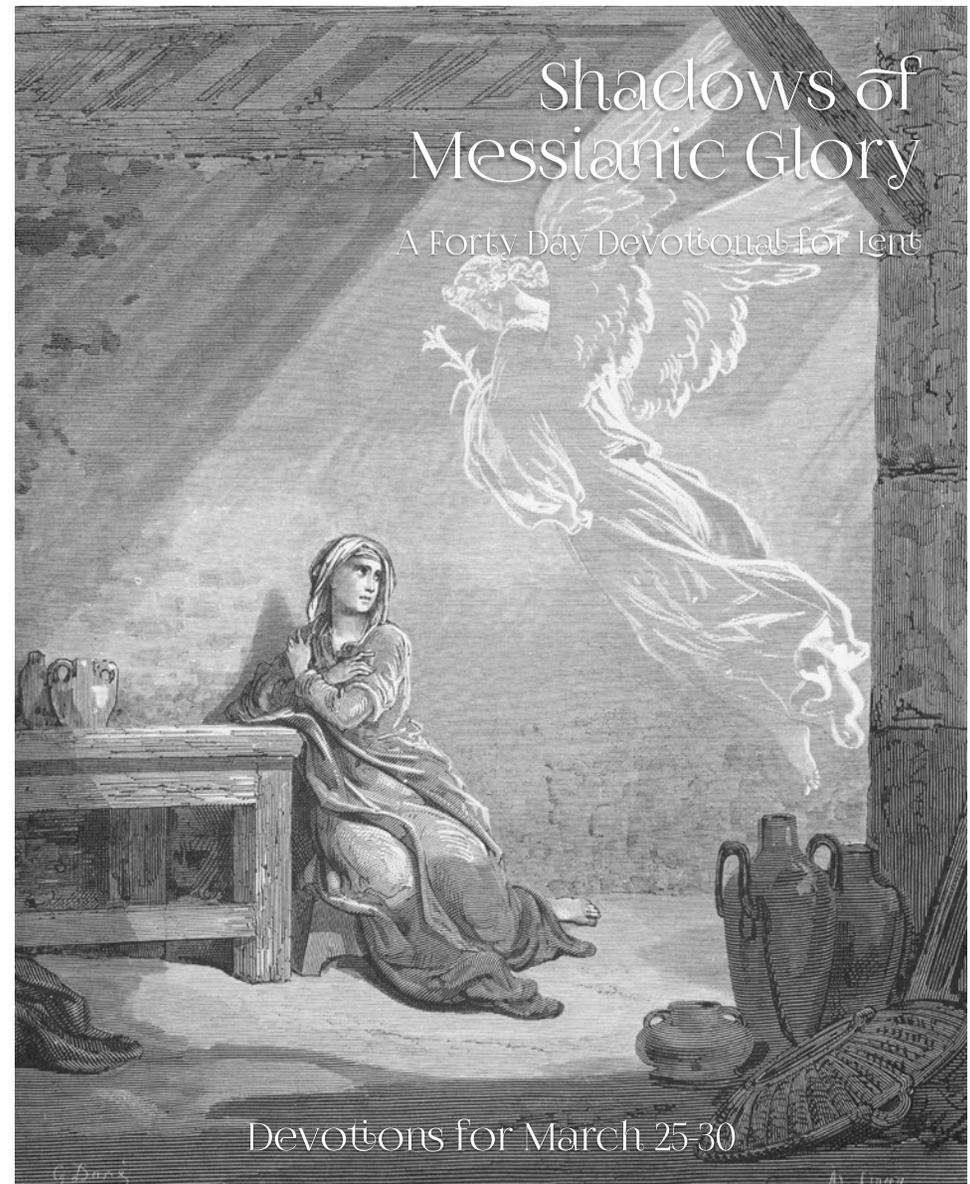
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"The virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call His name Immanuel."

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 7:14
Malachi 4:1-6
Psalm 36:9

Genesis 50:11
Ezekiel 37:1-3
Zechariah 11:13

Marc h 25
Feast of the
Annunciation

Isaiah 7:14

Timeline
700 years before
Christ

Prophet
Isaiah

Fulfillment
Matthew 1:23
Luke 1:31-34

Prayer
*Thank You, Jesus,
for becoming hu-
man and earning
the gifts of for-
giveness and eter-
nal life. Amen.*

Behold, the virgin shall conceive
and bear a son, and shall call his
name Immanuel.

Jesus started life the same way we all do. He was conceived and grew in His mother's womb. By her pains and labors, He was pushed out, born into this world. God's incarnation commenced in a very human way because He was in every way human.

When we think about Christ's humanity, it's usually in the context of His being able to relate to us. It is that understanding found in the book of Hebrews that "we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses."

But God didn't become human in Christ just to sympathize with us. That God became human and dwelt among us means so much more than that. By His sinless life and His innocent sufferings and death, Jesus both kept God's Law and paid the price for sin. When Jesus died on the cross, He didn't pay the price for His own sins—He didn't have any. He paid the price for our sins. By our Baptism we are joined to His saving work and the righteousness He earned by His perfectly lived human life.

This righteousness is credited to us. We are declared righteous in the eyes of God for Jesus' sake. As Paul explains in Romans, we were cursed with original sin through Adam, the first human. Likewise we are blessed, by grace through faith, with the righteousness and forgiveness the perfect man, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, earned for us. This is Immanuel, which means "God with us."

Jesus is human just like us. He is one of us. He is with us. And Jesus, the God-man, is also for us, doing what we cannot, out of compassion and mercy for us.

By Rev. Richard Gizynski

I took the thirty pieces of silver
and threw them into house of the
LORD, to the potter.

"What's the exchange look like today?" If you're traveling you will always want to know the answer to this question. For example, if you head north you'll find that one U.S. dollar is currently worth about \$1.30 in Canadian currency. The last time both currencies were worth the same amount was back in 2008. What does this mean? If you travel up north, and a shopkeeper agrees to take your US dollar *on par* with Canadian currency, you're being short-changed!

When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, he was filled with remorse and tried to return the coins. It was a horrible exchange!

Think of those things that Satan waves enticingly before our eyes that appear more profitable than the relationship we have with our Savior—wealth, influence, popularity and more.

What a blessing it is to hear God's call to repentance and faith. He has made us the recipients of a breathtaking exchange. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we hear, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." He has taken all of our sins and has exchanged them for our Savior's righteousness. With Luther in the Small Catechism we can joyfully confess, "I believe that Jesus Christ ... has purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death."

Travel experts encourage folks to check the exchange rate regularly on their journey. That's great advice as we travel through Lent. Take time, daily and often, to hear these words and rejoice in the great exchange that God has given to us in His Son.

By Rev. David Tannahill

Marc h 30

Zechariah
11:13

Timeline
500 years before
Christ

Prophet
Zechariah

Fulfillment
Matthew 27:9-10

Prayer

*Gracious Savior,
thank You for do-
ing all of this for
me that I may be
Your own and
live under You in
Your kingdom.
Amen.*

Marc h 29

Psalm 36:9

Timeline
1000 years before
Christ

Prophet
David

Fulfillment
John 1:5
1 Peter 2:9

Prayer
*Father of Light,
by Your Spirit
enlighten our
faith and enliven
us in Your Son,
Jesus Christ, our
Lord. Amen.*

For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light do we see light.

There is a large reserve not far from where I live called the Lac-Mégantic Dark Sky Preserve. The aim of the reserve is to provide a place where human light pollution is reduced to an absolute minimum. In major cities of our planet it is no longer possible to see stars at night. Even in the suburbs, the expanse of the Milky Way is invisible and only the brightest planets and celestial objects can be observed without binoculars or a telescope. One cannot see the lights of the heavens in their pure beauty without deep darkness.

David suggests the same is not true of real, divine light. To appreciate the light that comes from God, we need to have the light of God among us. This is not a visible light, but a light that is truth and righteousness. We cannot see truth unless we first know truth. We cannot see that something is good and right unless we first know what goodness and rightness are. In the same way, through the light of Christ we come to see the lightness of God.

John writes in his Gospel that Jesus was the Word who was in the beginning with God. What was in Jesus was life, "and the life was the light of men" (John 1:5). To see life as it ought to be seen, we must first know what life is. Jesus walked among us as one who is truly alive. He demonstrated steadfast love, extended even to His enemies. He showed how one could judge in a way that could save people through repentance, rather than burying them in condemnation. He died to bring eternal life to you and to me. When we listen to His Word, we listen to the Light of the World who is also the only true fountain of life for all people.

By Rev. Charles St-Onge

Therefore, the place was named
Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the
Jordan.

It is quite the scene in Genesis 50. Jacob, Israel himself, is being laid to rest in the land which would one day be called by his name. He is laid to rest there in that land promised to his descendants. Joseph and his brothers stand by grieving with sincerity for a week of days. The elders of the Egyptians, weeping as if the head of their tribe has died, gather around them. The Canaanites, living on borrowed time in that land, note the severity of the mourning. The mourning is so great that the place where it occurred would be associated with grief by name from that point on.

Many years later, Jesus would speak of the blessings of life in His kingdom. He would say, "Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh." (Luke 6:1) At other times, He promised that the mourning would be comforted, and that was already welcome news. But good news became great when He said that the weeping would laugh. Not only would the sadness be removed, but joy so fierce that it shakes the belly would be given in its place.

But how? It would happen through another death and burial in the same land. This time a new Israel named Jesus would be buried. Then too the mourning would be great. The mourning would be so great that even the heavens would lament as their light dimmed. But this mourning would one day give way to uproarious joy. This death would prove to be the end to all of the mourning of the people of God. And when death is brought to an end, a good chuckle is in order. A snicker at the devil is more than appropriate. A laugh to the Lord must ensue. This we know: mourning meets its conqueror in the Messiah Jesus. Glory be to Him.

By Rev. Philip Hoppe

Marc h 26

Genesis 50:11

Timeline
1400 years before
Christ

Prophet
Moses

Fulfillment
Luke 6:1
John 12:20-26

Prayer
*Almighty God, as
we mourn sin and
death during
these forty days of
Lent, remind us
that because of
Jesus our mourn-
ing will one day
turn to laughter.
Amen.*

Marc h 27

Mabachi 4:1-6

Timeline

400 years before
Christ

Prophet

Malachi

Fulfillment

Matthew 3:12

Matthew

17:10-12

John 9:5

Prayer

*Restore our joy in
Your salvation
that we live free
from sin, glorying
in the hope of life
eternal, life with
You, life in Your
perfection. Amen.*

The sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

Our local Little League asks all the players to show their skills and then be drafted. As child after child runs bases and plays catch, the talent gap becomes clear. The kids are the same ages but have widely varying abilities.

The coaches are supposed to balance the teams appropriately, setting side by side the next Mike Trout and the next Sheldon Cooper. But what if we could make one team of all great players? It would be fun for that team only, I guess. They would go leaping like calves from the dugout, treading their opposition underfoot.

In the same way, we sometimes imagine if we could cull the chaff from the groups we are in. What if you could just exile those one or two malcontents in the office? What if you could finally ban that last troll from your online group?

We never seem to attain those utopias, because the sinners aren't just "out there." The separation we need from sin starts in our own hearts.

This is why Jesus' great fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy took an either/or and made it a both/and. Prophets Malachi and John seemed to expect that either Israel would turn from sin or the land would be utterly destroyed. Jesus took that utter destruction on the cross to separate us from sin once and for all. God's All-Star chose to play on the Bad New Bears, giving us the good news that our sins are thrown into the fire, root and branch.

For now we are both saint and sinner, but only one has been drafted for the eternal team. On the Last Day, we will come leaping out of our graves, free from the sin within ourselves.

By Rev. A. Daniel Guagenti

And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O LORD God, You know."

My high school biology classroom contained a human skeleton. Perhaps you remember something similar from your school days. You have certainly seen skeletons, skulls, and bones in other places, like museums and doctor's offices. Human bones are a fairly common sight. They are so common we hardly think about where they come from.

But these bones do come from somewhere. They are the remainder of a human life. The skeleton in my high school classroom once belonged to a human being. This person had once been alive, but now he or she is not. The bones are only a sign of a life that is over. No more life can come from them.

God showed some human bones to Ezekiel and asked him a question: "Can these bones live?" Humanly speaking, the answer is "no." Dead bones can never come back to life.

When Jesus' body was placed in the tomb, He was as dead as the bones God showed to Ezekiel. According to human understanding, Jesus' body would soon be reduced to bones as well. And no life could come from dead bones.

Can these bones live? We would say "no," but this is not God's answer. Against all human experience and understanding, Jesus would come back to life. His bones would live.

We might ask ourselves a question: can my bones live? When my life is ended, is there any hope for more life? Through Jesus God answers the question, "Yes." Our bones will live again.

By Rev. Jonathan Mueller

Marc h 28

Ezekiel 37:1-3

Timeline

600 years before
Christ

Prophet

Ezekiel

Fulfillment

Matthew

27:52-53

John 5:21

Prayer

*Lord God, You
bring forth life
from death and
give hope where
there was none.
As we come closer
to the end of our
lives, remind us of
the example of
Jesus. May we
follow His path
through the grave
to new life. Make
our bones live
again. In Jesus'
name we pray.
Amen.*