



Winfree Church

# **Lent Devotional Guide**

Share Christ | Serve Others

**Section Two:**

*Temptation*

# Table of Content



Day 13 - Peggy Rutledge	1
Day 14 - Karla Ogden	3
Day 15 - Dr. Mike Clingenpeel	5
Day 16 - Vivian Silmon	7
Day 17 - Jim Hamacher	9
Day 18 - Robin McNeny	12
Day 19 - Steve Hutcherson	14
Day 20 - Mark Rutledge	16
Day 21 - Sharon Miles	18
Day 22 - Matt Knesal	20
Day 23 - Jimmy Doan	22

I The verses cited at the beginning of today's devotional reading (Mk 13:36-37) come at the end of a long conversation Jesus had with four of his disciples. It was a few days before what would be Jesus' final passover with his disciples, and Jesus had been teaching in the temple. Then he went to sit on the Mount of Olives with Peter, James, John and Andrew who were asking him questions privately, "...Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" (Mk 13:4) They were trying to understand the last days and when Christ would return. Jesus describes for them a time of extreme tribulation that should make all of us shudder. Then, he ends by saying ,

**"TAKE HEED, KEEP ON THE ALERT; FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHEN THE APPOINTED TIME WILL COME. IT IS LIKE A MAN AWAY ON A JOURNEY, WHO UPON LEAVING HIS HOUSE AND PUTTING HIS SLAVES IN CHARGE, ASSIGNING TO EACH ONE HIS TASK, ALSO COMMANDED THE DOORKEEPER TO STAY ON THE ALERT. THEREFORE, BE ON THE ALERT—FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE IS COMING, WHETHER IN THE EVENING, AT MIDNIGHT, OR WHEN THE ROOSTER CROWS, OR IN THE MORNING— IN CASE HE SHOULD COME SUDDENLY AND FIND YOU ASLEEP. WHAT I SAY TO YOU I SAY TO ALL, 'BE ON THE ALERT!'" (MK 13:33-37)**

Again, in the next chapter (Mark 14), as they are in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus twice asks them to watch with him, but they fall asleep. The third time Jesus tells them "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mk 14:38).

There's a spiritual war raging in the world around us. We are surrounded by it every day, evidenced in the chaos, evil and corruption in the daily news. Jesus has asked us to keep watch for His return, but Satan has an arsenal of ways to keep us from "keeping watch". One of the most effective ways is complacency. If he can lull us into accepting and tolerating the evil and chaos around us, we fall asleep spiritually, missing the returning Christ. If he can't lull us to sleep, he often tries to overwhelm us with the sheer volume of chaos and evil, so that we change our focus and become discouraged, pessimistic, and lose hope, forgetting that the battle is already won. It was won on the cross and through the resurrection; now we watch for the promised return of Christ. How many missed seeing Jesus, the Messiah, as he walked among them because of being spiritually asleep or too focused on the issues of their day.

Yes, we will see and be aware of the evil and chaos around us. And yes, God expects us "...to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). But Jesus' tells us that ultimately and at all times, our hearts and minds should be prepared and our eyes should be focused, watching for His return.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What keeps you from being on watch? Complacency? Being overwhelmed? Losing focus?
2. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told the disciples to watch and pray. How can praying help you to keep watch?
3. The disciples were often together when Jesus told them to keep watch. How can we as a church body, brothers and sisters in Christ, help each other to keep watch?
4. Read the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13). Jesus ends the parable with the admonition, "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour." (Mt 25:13) What connections do you see between this parable and Jesus' instructions to the disciples to watch?
5. How can you apply these scriptures in your personal life here and now?



The Common Criminal  
Fleming Rutledge

As I read the story of Jane and Sally, I found myself identifying with their self-righteousness and judgment. It was a sobering realization—how often do I fall into the same patterns without even noticing? Just as the Pharisees in Scripture displayed these attitudes, so do I when I am not on guard against them. Jesus' words in Matthew 11 remind me that self-righteousness can close our hearts to His truth. If I am caught up in my own sense of moral superiority, I am not truly listening to His voice. How can I follow His will if I am not first surrendering my own?

Christ humbled Himself to be crucified between two criminals. He willingly endured the cross for me, bearing my sin so that I could be fully restored to God. That sacrifice reminds me that no matter how much I may try to justify myself, I am entirely dependent on His grace. If I am not careful, my own pride, judgment, or unwillingness to extend grace to others can become barriers in my relationship with Him.

**YET, IN HIS MERCY, HE CONTINUES TO TEACH ME, LOVE ME, AND  
CALL ME BACK TO HIM DESPITE MY SHORTCOMINGS.**

I can recall times when I have judged others harshly, believing that I had a clearer understanding of righteousness. Yet, in those moments, I was blind to my own faults. I remember a particular instance where I judged someone else's behavior, not realizing I had contributed to the sabotage of a third party. I later had to go and apologize for my behavior. God convicted me, showing me my own need for grace and how quick I was to withhold it from others. This realization humbled me and reminded me that my role is not to judge, but to love as Christ loves.

The contrast between self-righteousness and true humility in Christ is at the heart of the gospel. Jesus' rebuke of those who rejected Him, despite the clear signs, serves as a warning: intellectual or moral superiority can become obstacles to faith. Instead, He calls us to come to Him as we are—with humility, repentance, and a willingness to learn.

This passage challenged me to reflect on my own heart. Are there times when I, like Jane and Sally, have been quick to judge rather than show grace? Have I ever let my pride keep me from recognizing my need for Christ? What behaviors in my own life might be keeping me separated from Him?

### Reflection Questions:

1. What stood out to you most in the story of Sally and Jane?
2. Did it challenge your perspective in any new ways?
3. Are there attitudes or behaviors in your own character that keep you from fully embracing Christ's grace?

## The Divine Scandal

Emil Brunner

Two Swiss theologians dominated theological conversation in Europe during the first two-thirds of the 20th century, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. Their work gave rise to a theological school of thought called neo-orthodoxy.

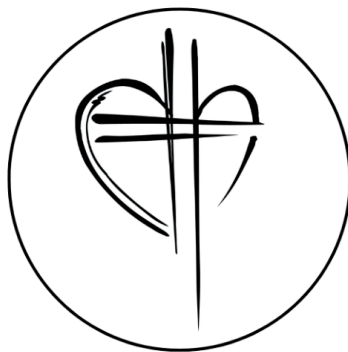
Brunner was raised in the traditions of the Swiss Reformed Church, and remained there his entire life. The prevailing philosophy on the Continent of his youth was a rationalism that gave rise to a liberal theology. Brunner was a churchman whose early career was as a pastor, and his theology was founded on the Bible and concern for the Gospel. He rejected both liberalism and rigid orthodoxy, and found the basis for faith in his understanding that Jesus is the fullest revelation of God to human beings, and our deepest need is to experience God in Christ. So Brunner's theology, centered on Christ, was seen as a new form of orthodoxy because it rejected rationalism and liberal theology.

Our devotional, "The Divine Scandal," is a clear example of Brunner's style and thought. For one thing, it is based on scripture—I Corinthians 1:23. Few biblical texts are more central to the Gospel than the declaration that "we preach Christ crucified." This essay is a serious attempt to help us understand why this message was so hard for all its recipients, Jews and Gentiles alike. One could argue that, while it is familiar, it is no less a scandal to a secular generation today.

For another, Brunner presents a series of ideas basic to the Gospel: human beings are sinners, we cannot achieve perfection by human efforts, and God reaches down to us in the death of Jesus on the cross. “This act of becoming one of us begins at Christmas and ends on Good Friday,” writes Brunner. What an important reminder of the Gospel as we move through Lent toward Holy Week and Easter.

### Reflection Questions

1. I once saw a line of graffiti that read: “The cross—what a joke!” Do you think the writer of this graffiti was mocking the cross, or was he restating what Paul said in I Corinthians 1:23?
2. Brunner says our human attempts to rise to God’s level are likely to end in despair or in self-righteousness. Which is more likely your problem?
3. How would you explain the death of Jesus on a cross to an honest, serious enquirer about the Christian faith?





Truth to Tell

Barbara Brown Taylor

Have you ever looked in the mirror and asked 'Who is that person?' Or recognized it was you but not liked what you have seen? Self-denial helps us ignore what is really true. We can keep doing what we have always done if we just look away and pretend we didn't 'see' the truth.

The mirror and the cross in the Bible are themes that relate to Jesus and faith. Mirrors are generally symbolic of spiritual and psychological depth. They don't only reveal our appearance but also who we are on a deeper level. James 1:23-24 says that hearing the Word of God is like seeing one's true face in a mirror. Some will deny what they look like so they can continue their sinful ways.

**BUT JESUS REFLECTS TRUTH AND IF YOU ACCEPT THAT TRUTH AND DENY YOURSELF THEN YOU CAN FIND AN ABUNDANT LIFE IN CHRIST AS YOU ARE SET FREE OF YOUR SIN.**

Jesus accepted the consequences of OUR sin and died for us on the cross so that we could have that abundant life also, if we follow Him. The cross of Jesus is our mirror and his suffering and death allow us to see our extreme sin and selfishness. He took the brutal punishment that should have been ours. He died in our place. That is the truth...the truth of the cross. That truth will set you free of your sin (John 8: 32)

Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matthew 16: 24) He is asking us to say ‘no’ to our own selfish, self-preserving desires and ‘yes’ to God, to choose doing the Lord’s will over our own.

One way to untangle the selfishness that often envelops us is to devote our resources to Kingdom purposes. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21)

#### PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

1. Do you struggle to deny self – to give up your desires and follow Christ?
2. Are you personally invested in the gospel and discipleship?
3. Have you put your time, talents, and treasures at Jesus’ feet?
4. When was the last time you denied yourself by being inconvenienced?
5. Does your life reflect to others the light and truth of the gospel?

They Took My Lord Away

John Donne

**THEY TOOK MY LORD AWAY AND I KNOW NOT WHERE THEY LAID HIM"**  
**JOHN 20:21**

The poet / pastor John Donne authored today's reading, and you probably recognize this seventeenth century author's name from your high school English literature class. Two phrases from his poems are well known: "No man is an island" and "Death be not proud". In today's reading, Donne explores Mary Magdalene's sobbing response when she arrived at Jesus' grave and discovered His body was no longer in the tomb: "They took my Lord away and I know not where they have laid him."

Donne uses Mary Magdalene's acknowledgement, "I know not where they have laid him," to admit that sometimes each of us becomes so distracted and distanced from God that we too could lament, "I don't know where He is." Occasionally this is due to a spiritual malaise on our part. Other times this distance is due to unexpected issues and circumstances that shake us to our very souls. "The dark night of the soul" is a phrase from the writings of the 16th-century Spanish mystic and Catholic poet St. John of the Cross, and describes a season of despair, sadness, and hopelessness that causes one to wonder: "Is there a God and if there is, does He know and care how much I hurt? Where is He?"

**Reflection Question:** Describe a season in your life when God seemed so distant that you didn't know how to find him any more – when you had a dark night of the soul. Were the reasons for this distance between you and God similar to the reasons Donne offers? What are those reasons?

“No one ever loved Jesus as much as Mary Magdalene...” so asserts Bible scholar William Barclay. Barclay may have over-stated Mary's love, but think about it:

- Jesus cast seven devils out of her, Mark 16:9-10, Luke 8:2. She must have been grateful beyond words for her new life, free from daily torment and debilitating mental anguish.
- Mary became more than a believer in Jesus. She also became a traveling companion. She, along with the disciples, was one of three women who traveled with Jesus from town to town and also financially supported His ministry. Luke 8:1-3
- Mary Magdalene stayed with Jesus' mother, near the cross, (John 19:25) and watched the soldiers mutilate His body. She wasn't about to leave her friend in His hour of pain and agony. She stayed until He took His last breath.
- Mary was one of a small group of women who got up early Sunday morning to go to Jesus' grave to begin the Jewish wailing dirge and to clean and anoint the maimed body with spices.
- Mary Magdalene was the first person to see that her dear, dear friend, Jesus, was no longer dead but truly and fully alive. He had beat death. Mark 16:9



**Reflection:** Based on the facts above, obviously Jesus dramatically deeply impacted Mary Magdalene's life. In what dramatic or undramatic, ordinary ways has Jesus impacted your life?

**Praise:** Mary personally witnessed that Jesus had overcome His horrible death and was truly alive. Today, because of Jesus' resurrection, we no longer need fear death. As Donne reminds us believers, death does not have the last word – it too will die and for that we praise Him:

**Death be not proud**  
**For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow**  
**Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.**  
**And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.**

Remember Her

Father Ernesto Cardenal

Today's devotion, written by Father Ernesto Cardenal, a Nicaraguan Catholic priest, invites us to join his "campesino worship meeting" (pg 98) – what we might call a small group. The group, led by Father Cardenal, includes 11 members and 2 students. Please grab your Bible and pull up a chair, so you too might participate in the discussion.

Padre Cardenal is leading the group's study of Matthew 26:6-11a. Open your Bible and read these verses yourself. Note below who was present in the room with Jesus. Which of these people is most like you?

-----

Padre Cardenal first focused the group's attention on verses 8-9. Numerous participants offered their interpretation of this verse. Which group member's understanding of verse 8 most closely matches yours?

-----

Or perhaps you have a different understanding of verse 8. Write your understanding of verse 8 here.

-----

Padre Cardenal also asked the group to consider verse 10 (see pg 101). In particular, they discussed the following statement from Jesus:: "The poor you will always have among you ...." Read pages 101 – 104. Reflect on the group members' responses to Jesus' statement about the poor. Of all the responses given, including those from the Padre, which one or two resonate with you the most and why?

---

The end of the group's discussion turned very personal as they sought to apply these verses to their daily lives. Olivia offered two pointed comments recorded on pages 104 and 105. Reflect on Olivia's remarks. How do you feel about what she said?

---

Olivia said (page 105): "That woman gave up a luxury." Indeed a alabaster jar of nard was a magnificent luxury in the 1st century. Unlike the members of Padre Cardenal's study group who were apparently of limited means, we possess many luxuries. Which of your luxuries could become like the "perfume that the woman poured on Jesus" if you offered it to Jesus for the sake of the poor?

---

In reality, how can relinquishing some of our luxuries make a difference in the lives of those around us who live daily in poverty?

---

What luxury will you relinquish tomorrow?

---

Merchandising Truth

Meister Eckart

**The temple of God wants to be master of is the human soul,  
which he created and fashioned just like himself. – Eckhart  
von Hochheim (c. 1260 – c. 1328)**

**Author** Meister Eckhart was a German Catholic priest and theologian whose teachings led to accusations of heresy within the Catholic Church. He believed God would not destroy any soul because He desires to perfect everything He created. He sought solitude to empty himself of all human desires so that the Holy Spirit could fill his soul and direct his life path.

**Summary:** Merchandising Truth presents a compelling argument against transactional theology, the concept of exchanging something of human value with God for invaluable treasures only God holds. Eckhart sees the folly of any attempt to merchandise the temple that God makes within the soul of every human being. He uses the scene from Matthew 21 when Jesus drove out the merchants profiting from exchanging currencies and selling doves for sacrifice before entering the Temple to pray and worship God. In anger, Jesus said, “It is written,” he said to them,

**“My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are  
making it a den of robbers.”**



Eckhart sets a high goal for preparing for Holy Week. He contends that when we empty our souls of all human desires and allow Jesus to fill them, our flesh can become obedient to our inner spiritual self. We will receive lasting peace in serving God without expectations for any return.

**Reflection:** Ponder and pray God's holiness and desire for us in preparation for Holy Week...

1. How often do we pray transactionally with God, offering our obedience in exchange for His mercy or blessing? Is this how Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9-14?
2. What do we have of any value God has not graciously given us (Romans 8:31-33)?
3. Does 1 Corinthians 15:10 reflect Meister Eckhart's view of God's grace?
4. How can we genuinely empty our souls of all human desires? Ponder this Eckhart quote: "To be full of things is to be empty of God. To be empty of things is to be full of God."

**The best and highest attainment in this life is to remain still and let God act and speak in you.**

**– Meister Eckhart**

## Sheath Your Sword

John Dear

John Dear takes the reader on a course of reflection on Matthew 26:50-54 that focuses on the “Nonviolent Jesus” rather than Jesus the Christ/Messiah. In the verses before this, Jesus had reminded his disciples that He was about to complete His mission and that their mission was about to change from their previous experiences of being sent out. It was a lot to understand, although Jesus had repeated this message multiple times. Perhaps it was more difficult this time.

**The Passover meal was a time of remembering what God had done, but this time the elements were given new meaning---the beginning of a new covenant.**

This Passover meal gave a new meaning to the unleavened bread and wine. The bread represented Christ’s body broken for them, and the wine, His blood, of a new covenant, “shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.” They were to continue to do this in remembrance of Him. This would be the last time He would drink this cup until they drink it again together in His Father’s kingdom.

Jesus also announced that one of them would betray Him. Satan desired to sift them all, but they all declared they would remain faithful, and Peter was even more vocal about his fidelity to Jesus. So, in Gethsemane Jesus asked them to watch and pray in preparation for His arrest. They were tired and fell asleep multiple times only to be awakened by Jesus.

When the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, arrived with an armed crowd from the High priest and Roman military the disciples were surprised although Jesus had only hours before reminded them of his death by the leaders and His resurrection. Peter's reaction was to cut off the High Priest's servant's ear with his sword. Jesus told him to put his sword back in its place and reminding all of them that the consequence of using the sword is death by the sword. Most important was God's plan for Jesus Christ, fulfilling the scriptures (OT). Jesus' death would establish peace between God and those He gave to Jesus Christ.

It is not by violence that we take the Good News of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. It is not by violence that we force others to remember the Lord's Supper and the elements of the new covenant. It is not by violence that we force people to come into our fellowship, church. It is not by violence that we require payment from all who are not part of the new covenant. The source of peace is the life changing work of the Holy Spirit in those who believe in Jesus Christ, not nonviolence. (John 14:27; 16:33; Col. 3:15; Rom. 5:1)

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. John Dear focused on the nonviolent God sending the nonviolent Jesus to model a life of nonviolence for His followers/disciples even in His arrest, beating and death. Is that why Jesus died on the cross?
2. Why did God send His only Son? (John 3:16-18)
3. What is the key to living in the pattern of following Christ? (John 13:34-35)
4. What does this life look like? (Romans 12:9-21) Does this resemble what John Dear is pointing toward?
5. Do you see these characteristics in your life? Do you see them in your church?
6. Please read 1Peter 2:12-3:22. Meditate on the Christ obedient life.

Believing is Seeing  
Romano Guardini

The Gospel of John is singular in showing a special interest in Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts do not list Thomas other than in listing of the apostles. In John's Gospel his character is clearly shown. Thomas was loyal but demanded tangible proof of intangible truths. Thomas shows, by his remark that I do not believe he is alive,

**“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”**

Keep in mind that Thomas had not been with the rest of disciples when Jesus appeared to them, and they are finding it difficult to communicate to him on an individual basis what they had experienced.

What jumps out to the reader as the story unfolds is that Jesus is so focused in on Thomas that the appearance seemed to be a special visitation made entirely for Thomas' benefit. It was as if the risen Christ came back once more so that Thomas would not be lost ( See John 17:12).

The next words from Jesus was “You believe because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” We all want to be blessed by God. However, many take on the same wording of Thomas.



## How can we believe when we have not seen?

Romano Guardini points toward one of the ways in which we can believe without seeing him physically. Reading and studying the Word of God can help us in this regard. He wrote, “What comes from God touches gently, comes quietly; does not disturb freedom; leads to quiet, profound, peaceful resolve within the heart.”

When we are quiet with the Lord and have a repentant heart, humble and seek with all of our hearts God’s message we will be blessed with His presence. Now the question each person must deal with is; Are you willing to take the time to sit quietly, read His Word and request Him to come near so that you may receive His blessings?

### Reflection:

- As you read John 20:25-29, what do you discover about Thomas and the disciples hiding behind locked doors?
- Why do you think Thomas was not blessed by Jesus when others were?
- How do you think you would have responded to seeing Jesus appear before you as he did to Thomas and the Disciples?

Turning

Henry Drummond

When we think of disciplines who were deeply devoted to Jesus and His mission, Peter is probably one of the first names to come to mind. This man saw his miracles and even walked on the water. Peter loved Jesus, but Peter is human. We all wish to follow the Lord as close as we can, but we fail. We do not make Him a priority, we sin against the Father daily, and yet we see here when Peter betrays Jesus and when he denies him, Jesus turns and offers repentance.

Repentance is the turning away from sin, and sometimes it is a painful experience. We see Peter completely overcome with sadness when he denies Jesus. After the resurrection, Jesus confronts Peter. After asking him do you love me twice,

**The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. "Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."**

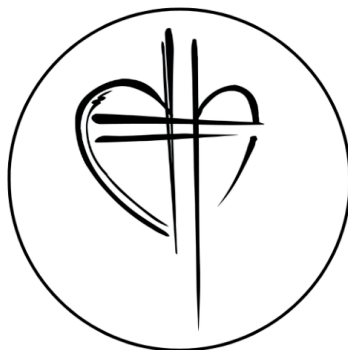
JOHN 21:17

But even though he had done wrong, Jesus offered Peter repentance.

To many times we are quick to take our bag of sins, offer them to Jesus, and instead of turning away from that sin, we pick up the bag up again. Repentance is leaving that bag, surrendering it at the alter and turning away; it is walking out the door free of that weight, in trusting the Father to help cast our sin to the depths. Jesus offers us a turning, where we can find freedom from sin. That we can wait on and depend on the Father to help us overcome the troubles and sins of this world.

**Reflection Questions:**

1. Where in your life can you turn toward the Lord?
2. What sins do you keep picking up and not leaving at the alter?
3. Where do you try to hold control onto too tightly, instead of letting go so the Lord can work in you?
4. Where can you offer forgiveness in your life?
5. What is God placing on your heart after reading this?



The Crucified  
Kahlil Gibran

As we finish the last day in the section of Temptation during our Lenten daily devotional, we read a poem by a Lebanese man name Kahlil Gibran called “The Crucified”. Gibran’s depiction of Christ is not confined to traditional Christian theology. Instead, he portrays Jesus as a rebel against societal corruption, hypocrisy, and oppression. The poem resonates with themes of suffering, justice, and the eternal struggle between the spiritual and the material world.

**“HE CAME TO MAKE THE HUMAN HEART A TEMPLE, AND THE SOUL AN ALTAR, AND THE MIND A PRIEST.”**

Key Themes & Meanings:

1. **Suffering & Sacrifice:** Gibran reflects on the suffering of Jesus, but rather than focusing only on his physical crucifixion, he emphasizes the spiritual pain of being misunderstood and rejected by those he sought to save.
2. **Hypocrisy of Society:** The poem criticizes religious and political institutions that claim to follow Christ but betray his teachings by fostering greed and power instead of love and humility.

3. **Timelessness of Christ's Message:** Gibran presents Jesus not as a distant historical figure but as an ever-present force, continuously crucified in the hearts of those who fight for truth and justice.

4. **Personal & Universal Reflection:** He invites readers to see Christ not just in churches or scripture but in the everyday struggles of humanity—among the oppressed, the rejected, and the seekers of truth.

Gibran's "The Crucified" is not just about Jesus—it is about all who suffer for righteousness and all who challenge the status quo in pursuit of a higher truth. His words push readers to reflect on their own role in either perpetuating or alleviating suffering in the world. It challenges believers and non-believers alike to see Christ beyond dogma—as a living presence in the fight against injustice.

**"FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW THAT  
EVERY DAY IS THY DAY"**

### **Personal Reflection:**

Take a few minutes to pause and pray to God about where in your life you can relate to those talked about in the poem, that are missing the mark, of what Christ truly meant to world. What is one tangible way you can not allow yourself to go back to that wrong mindset?

# NOTES

# DATES TO REMEMBER

---

Maundy Thursday

April 17, 2025

Service at 7:00PM

Palm Sunday

April 13, 2025

Services at 9:40AM & 11:00AM

Easter

April 20, 2025

Services at 9:40AM & 11:00AM