

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

March 26, 2023

## MEDITATE

*letting your body digest scripture*

by Drew Downs

I have a reputation for thinking.

What people usually see is the outcome of the thinking. The connections I've already made and the thinking I've already done. Other times they are catching it in the middle. As I'm processing over several days or when I need to process out loud.

In Lent, we study and meditate on Scripture as an act of self-discipline.

Meditation might bring to mind sitting cross-legged in silence for an excruciatingly long time. Which also isn't the wrong idea.

In meditating on Scripture, we're invited not only to take it in by reading, but to digest it by ruminating, dreaming, dwelling, and praying. Not *only* with thoughts, but with silence. Letting the scripture speak to you. Not as a nut *you* need to crack open, but as if its job were to crack open *you*.

# LENT

2023

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### The Word Confusion

On Ash Wednesday, we're invited to keep a holy Lent. The invitation is this:

"I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word."

That last part has a beautiful double meaning. And one many people of faith tend to get tangled up in. And I think this phrasing is quite intentional.

God's holy Word is Jesus.

It also how we refer to Scripture (the Bible).

Are we supposed to be reading Jesus? Clearly not. But meditating on him? Now that's quite clearly part of the deal.

Many Christians are far more used to seeing this as a reference to Scripture wherever that phrase is found. This obviously comes from the desire to maintain "the centrality of the Bible" in the Christian life.

We, however, are part of a two-thousand year faith which recognizes Jesus as the Word. And this bit of confusion makes our understanding **richer**. Because it isn't *just* about Scripture. It's about relationship, Christ, our mission, our community. Through Scripture and tradition and reason/experience. So rich and beautiful.

With love,  
Drew

# LENT

2023

---

## FOR SUNDAY

*The Fifth Sunday in Lent*

March 26, 2023

### **Collect**

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

John 11:1-45 (excerpt from it below)

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

# LENT

---

## Reflection

Grief does some things to us. It rattles us. Rends us. Confuses us. One day we feel normal and the next we're overwhelmed.

Mary comes to Jesus in grief. And Jesus grieves. The people grieve.

The grief doesn't just manifest in weeping, though. But in anger. Frustration. And rationalizing.

"If you had been here!"

The perpetual question: what if? is weaponized by grief into an accusation. *You should have been here!* No matter that he found out a couple days ago and Lazarus was dead four days. Grief doesn't present logically.

The blame shifts. *So what. You should have tried.* Now it's about effort. Jesus didn't try enough. And then, it gets even more presumptuous. *Can't you raise the dead? If you gave some dude sight, surely you can give Lazarus his life back!*

The irony, of course, is that he actually does. But not because they shamed him. But for the glory of God.

We can no doubt relate to this experience. We've received strange demands from the grieving. Parents, friends, loved ones trying to cope. And many of us have been the grieving one saying irrational things, demanding, trying to understand.

Jesus acts as if people misunderstand the nature of death. And invites us to stop obsessing and let go. Perhaps he knows what we don't. We should listen to him.

---

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807  
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG

---