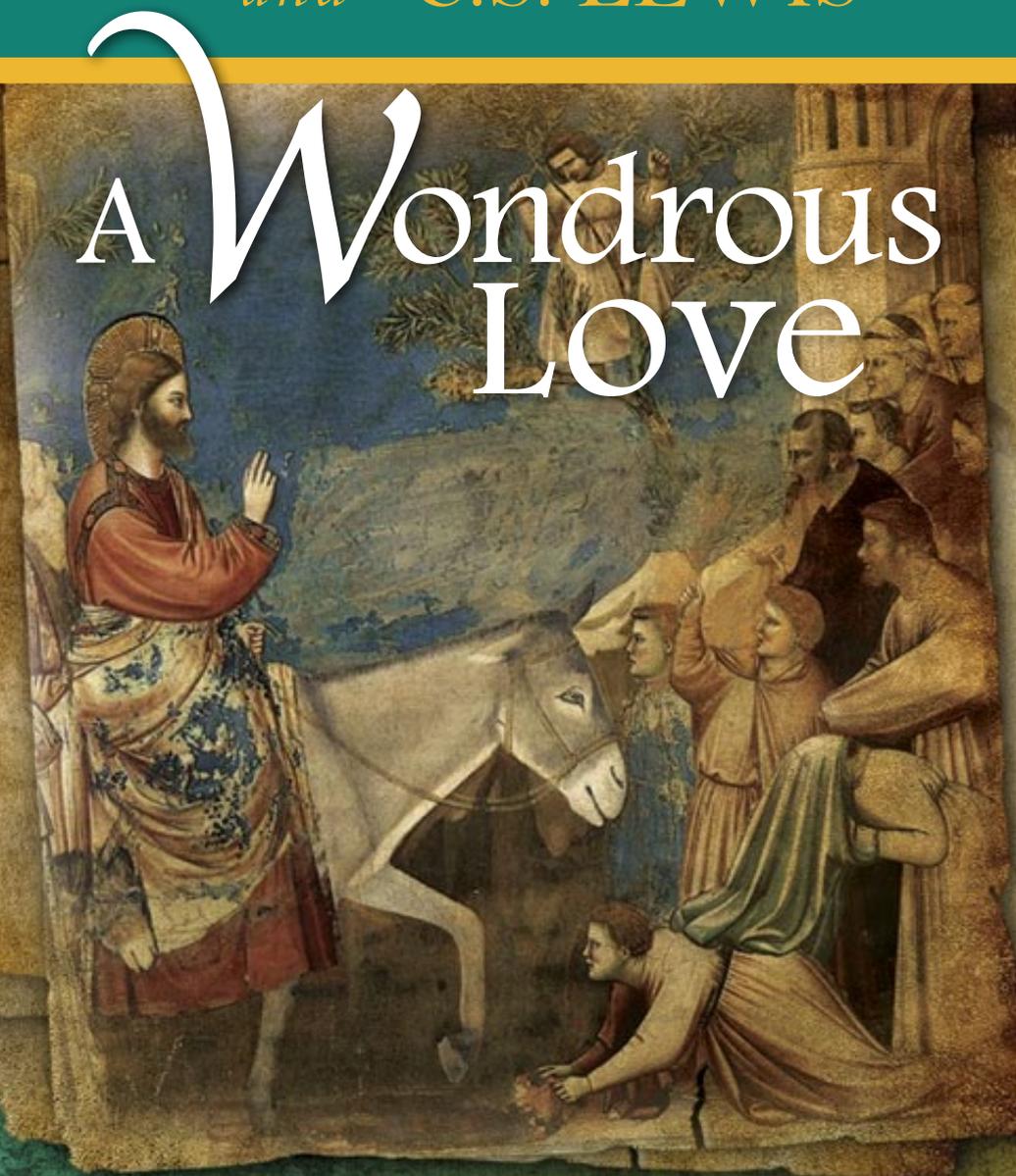


HENRI J.M. NOUWEN
and C.S. LEWIS

A Wondrous Love



DAILY LENTEN MEDITATIONS
AND PRAYERS



ASH WEDNESDAY

Talk of Forgiveness

*Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning...
Return to the LORD, your God...*

JOEL 2:12-13

Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need any forgiveness. It is after you have realized that there is a real moral law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk. (CSL)

LORD JESUS, help me to recognize my sins and to ask forgiveness.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Unattractive Solutions

“This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased.”

MATTHEW 17:5

Yes, there is that voice, the voice that speaks from above and from within and that whispers softly or declares loudly: “You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.” It certainly is not easy to hear that voice in a world filled with voices that shout: “You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless, you are despicable, you are nobody—unless you can demonstrate the opposite.”

These negative voices are so loud and so persistent that it is easy to believe them. That's the great trap. It is the trap of self-rejection. Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity and power can, indeed, be a great temptation, but their seductive power often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation of self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. (HJMN)

**LORD, help me to appreciate just how much
you have blessed me in so many ways.**

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Body and Soul

*Yet day after day they seek me,
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God.*

ISAIAH 58:2

The body ought to pray as well as the soul. Body and soul are both the better for it. Bless the body. Mine has led me into many scrapes, but I've led it into far more. If imagination were obedient, the appetites would give us very little trouble. And from how much it has saved me! And but for our body, one whole realm of God's glory—all that we receive through the senses—would go unpraised. For the beasts can't appreciate it, and the angels are, I suppose, pure intelligences. They understand colors and tastes better than our greatest scientists; but have they retinas or palates? I fancy the "beauties of nature" are a secret God has shared with us alone. That may be one of the reasons why we were made—and why the resurrection of the body is an important doctrine. (CSL)

**Let my prayer come to you, O LORD,
naturally and in purity and simplicity.**

The Core of Our Lives

I have loved you with an everlasting love.

JEREMIAH 31:3

It is central to the biblical tradition that God's love for his people should not be forgotten. It should remain with us in the present. When everything is dark, when we are surrounded by despairing voices, when we do not see any exits, then we can find salvation in a remembered love, a love that is not simply a wistful recollection of a bygone past, but a living force that sustains us in the present. Through memory, love transcends the limits of our lives. That is the message of the Bible...This is also the message that forms the core of our lives as ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (HJMN)

Dear God, your love is ever present to me. Make me always aware that it is mine to share with others.



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

How It Works

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:19

The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter. A good many different theories have been held as to how it works; what all Christians are agreed on is that it does work. I will tell you what I think it is like. All sensible people know that if you are tired and hungry, a meal will do you

good. But the modern theory of nourishment—all about vitamins and proteins—is a different thing. People ate their dinners and felt better long before the theory of vitamins was ever heard of; and if the theory of vitamins is some day abandoned, they will go on eating their dinners just the same. Theories about Christ's death are not Christianity: They are explanations of how it works. (CSL)

**FATHER, help me to remember that I need to have faith in you,
not to understand everything.**

MONDAY, FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Redemptive Suffering

But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

MATTHEW 6:17-18

Fasting is a different experience from missing your dinner by accident or through poverty. Fasting asserts the will against the appetite—the reward being self-mastery and the danger pride: Involuntary hunger subjects appetites and will together to the Divine will, furnishing an occasion for submission and exposing us to the danger of rebellion. But the redemptive effect of suffering lies chiefly in its tendency to reduce the rebel will. Ascetic practices, which in themselves strengthen the will, are only useful insofar as they enable the will to put its own house (the passions) in order, as a preparation for offering the whole man to God. (CSL)

**GOD, help me to remember your command to love you
with all my heart, all my mind and all my soul.**

TUESDAY, FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Body of Christ

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27

Here is another thing that used to puzzle me. Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in him? But the truth is God has not told us what his arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know him can be saved through him. But in the meantime, if you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is remain outside yourself. Christians are Christ's body, the organism through which he works. Every addition to that body enables him to do more. If you want to help those outside, you must add your own little cell to the body of Christ, who alone can help them. (CSL)

When I am reluctant to share my faith with others, LORD, remind me that someone once shared their faith with me.

WEDNESDAY, FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Finding Christ

Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

MATTHEW 16:24

The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: Submit with every fiber of your being and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look

Two of the most widely read and respected spiritual writers of the 20th century, Henri J.M. Nouwen and C.S. Lewis, are brought together in this daily devotional booklet. Nouwen and Lewis offer their deeply personal insights, understanding and pastoral sensitivity in this booklet that is an ideal accompaniment for a spiritually enriching Lenten season.

In the clearest of language and the simplest of prose, Nouwen and Lewis uncomplicate Christianity and God's love for us in a way few other authors could ever do. These reflections are a most appropriate way to enter into the spirit of Lent.

As with all of our seasonal booklets, each day includes a brief line of Scripture, a reflection drawn from one of the many classic books by Nouwen and Lewis, and a short prayer. Our hope is that this booklet will help make your Lenten journey one to remember.