

WORSHIP KIT

# THE HILLS OF LENT

A SERIES  
OF SERVICES  
FOR LENT

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FOR LENT**

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## About the Series

By means of hymns and dramatic homilies, the congregation is led on a biblically chronological journey to “mountaintop experiences” which all focus on the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At Mount Moriah, Abraham’s faith is tested and strengthened. At Mount Sinai, Moses and the Israelites receive the word of God. At Mount Carmel, Elijah calls for faith and faithfulness. Jesus joins the faithful in worship at Mount Zion. On Mount Olive, Jesus assures us that we too are the children of God. Finally, at Mount Calvary, we view “God’s own sacrifice complete.” Services begin with the “Psalms of Ascent.” Dramatic homilies involve a narrator and as many as four other readers. The congregation participates in the homilies with the singing of successive stanzas of “Unto the Hills.”

# THE HILLS OF LENT

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Week 1 (Ash Wednesday): Mount Moriah

## Order of Service

HYMN (*chosen by pastor or music director*)

*The Psalms for these services are taken from that portion of the Psalter titled “Songs of Ascent” (Psalms 120 through 134) which were offered “by the faithful pilgrims as they made their way up, through the hills of Judea to Jerusalem for the great festivals. Today’s litany includes Psalms 121, 127, 128, and 134.*

### LITANY

**P** I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

**C** My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

**P** He will not let your foot be moved, and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.

**C** Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

**P** The Lord himself watches over you.

**C** The Lord is your shade at your right hand, so that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

- P** The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.
- C** **The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.**
- P** Unless the Lord builds the house, their labor is in vain who build it.
- C** **Unless the Lord watches over the city, in vain the watchman keeps his vigil.**
- P** It is vain that you rise so early and go to bed so late;
- C** **vain too, to eat the bread of toil, for he gives to his beloved sleep.**
- P** Children are a heritage from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a gift.
- C** **Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.**
- P** Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them!
- C** **He shall not be put to shame when he contends with his enemies in the gate.**
- P** Happy are they all who fear the Lord, and who follow in his ways!
- C** **You shall eat the fruit of your labor; happiness and prosperity shall be yours.**
- P** Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive shoots round about your table.
- C** **The man who fears the Lord shall thus indeed be blessed.**
- P** The Lord bless you from Zion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. May you live to see your children's children.
- C** **May peace be upon Israel.**
- P** Behold, now! Bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, you that stand by night in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the holy place and bless the Lord.
- C** **The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you out of Zion.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY *(written by pastor or other worship leader)*

[The Imposition of Ashes may take place here.]

## HOLY SCRIPTURE

Romans 4:1-3, 18-25

☐ A reading from Romans, chapter 4:

What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness ...” In hope Abraham believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, “So shall your descendants be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “reckoned to him as righteousness.”

But the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification. The Word of the Lord.

John 8:31-40, 56-58

☐ The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 8th chapter:

Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, ‘You will be made free’?”

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house forever; the son continues forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did. Your Father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.” The Jews then said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” The Gospel of the Lord.

Unto the hills around do I lift up my longing eyes:  
Oh, whence for me shall my salvation come, from whence arise?  
From God the Lord doth come my certain aid,  
From God the Lord, who heav'n and earth hath made.

He will not suffer that thy foot be moved; safe shalt thou be.  
No careless slumber shall his eyelids close, who keepeth thee.  
Behold, he sleepeth not, he slumb'reth ne'er,  
who keepeth Israel in his holy care.

Jehovah is himself thy keeper true, thy changeless shade;  
Jehovah thy defense on thy right hand himself hath made.  
And thee no sun by day shall ever smite;  
No moon shall harm thee in the silent night.

From ev'ry evil shall he keep thy soul, from ev'ry sin;  
Jehovah shall preserve thy going out, thy coming in.  
Above thee watching, he whom we adore  
Shall keep thee henceforth, yea, forevermore.

SERMON: MOUNT MORIAH

*Participants for this presentation:*

*NARRATOR (probably the pastor), speaking from the pulpit.*

*All others read from the balcony or the rear of the church:*

*ABRAHAM, an older man*

*SARAH, his wife, an older woman*

*ISAAC, a boy who is in his teens or younger*

*VOICE, representing the Lord*

NARRATOR: The mountain we approach today is Mount Moriah—not as it appears today but as it would have looked almost 4,000 years ago, in the days of Abraham ... old Abraham ... blessed at last in his old age with the son of God's promise, Isaac. The road to Mount Moriah very much involves Isaac, and the promise of God which he represents.

ABRAHAM: Sarah, go quickly and make ready three measures of fine meal for our guests;

knead it and make cakes, while I run to the herd and find a calf, tender and good, to have prepared for them, with curds and milk to set before them, that they may eat.

VOICE: Abraham, where is Sarah your wife?

ABRAHAM: She is in the tent.

VOICE: I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.

NARRATOR: And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age.

SARAH: *(laughing)* After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?

VOICE: Why did Sarah laugh, and say, “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old”? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah will have a son.

NARRATOR: And it was so. The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of the son who was born to him, who Sarah bore him,

ABRAHAM: Isaac!

NARRATOR: A name that means “laughter.”

SARAH: God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age!

NARRATOR: And there was laughter in the tent of Abraham, as there is so frequently when the promises of God are evident in their keeping. The road to Mount Moriah therefore looks for now like such a happy way, punctuated with the laughter of a future that appears bright, and so secure.

VOICE: Fear not, Abraham, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great. Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be.

NARRATOR: And Abraham believed the Lord, and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

*(pause)*

NARRATOR: After these things, God tested Abraham.

VOICE: Abraham!



ABRAHAM: Here am I.

VOICE: Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

*(pause)*

NARRATOR: So Abraham rose early in the morning and took his son Isaac, and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.

ABRAHAM: Mount Moriah!

NARRATOR: And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went, the both of them together.

ISAAC: My father!

ABRAHAM: Here am I, my son.

ISAAC: Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

*(pause)*

ABRAHAM: God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.

NARRATOR: So they went both of them together ... to Mount Moriah, to a time of testing. And so we join them there ... old and helpless, possibly, like Abraham, aware at last of our mortality, the sober fact that “we are dust, and unto dust we shall return.” The season of Lent calls us year by year, like Abraham and Isaac, to lay aside our laughter for a while and to come face to face with our mortality ... to realize the debt we owe unto our God, the harsh demand which he has every right to claim from us, the stifling of laughter. Mount Moriah is a place from which we may look back, like Abraham, on blessings undeserved, on laughter granted unexpectedly, and on our doubts and fears and disbelief ... and where they well might lead. When we come to Mount Moriah, where God leads us for a time of testing ... Abraham built an altar there, ... and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. Then Abraham put forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

VOICE: Abraham! Abraham!

ABRAHAM: Here am I.

VOICE: Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

NARRATOR: And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was ...

ISAAC: a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns.

NARRATOR: And Abraham took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

ABRAHAM: On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.

*(pause)*

NARRATOR: And so, as is the case with every mountaintop experience, we make ready to leave Mount Moriah, the mount of testing. Other mountains loom before us as we go our Lenten way. Is it too early in the journey to observe that an ancient tradition holds that in a future time, under another rule, Abraham's mount of testing would bear another name—Calvary? Is it too soon in our journey to observe that there, at Calvary, Abraham's faith (and ours) would find fulfillment?

ABRAHAM: God will provide himself the lamb for offering, my son.

NARRATOR: Or is that truly the mountain toward which we must keep moving, even this early in our Lenten pilgrimage—the mountain where we must resort when in our lives, as in the life of Abraham, the laughter seems to have been snatched away, when faith is tested almost to the breaking point, and we confront the ashes of our own mortality?

VOICE: Abraham believed the Lord, and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

NARRATOR: So Abraham returned, it says, and Isaac with him ... to the laughter of the living for a while ... and to the tears as well—Sarah's death at last, in God's good time; and Isaac's marriage to Rebekah ... until "Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people." But death was different now, and so was life for those who carried on ... because of Mount Moriah, among other stops along the way, a mountaintop assurance on the journey for Abraham and Isaac—and for us as well—of the blessing which we celebrate again this Lent, by faith:

ABRAHAM: On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.

CREED

OFFERING

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

**P** Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.

**C** Go with us as we journey, God, as once you went with Abraham, our father in the faith.  
Grant that, like him, we hear your gracious promises and trust your holy Word.

**P** Everything that is written of the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.

**C** **O Lamb of God, you came to be our sacred Substitute, to take our place beneath the wrath that sin had brought upon our race. Give us the faith to trust in you when laughter is withdrawn.**

**P** For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.

**C** **For us you bore the mocking and the shame, O Lord. Give us the grace to see your face even in the midst of things we must endure.**

**P** They will scourge him and kill him.

**C** **Lord, by your stripes we are made whole, and by your death new life is promised to us all. Help us to put to death whatever in us is not of your will.**

**P** And on the third day he will rise.

**C** **Lead us, O Lord, from testing to triumph, that we may share the life which you have given us, eternally. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION