

LENT 1 - WAITING WITH WONDER
PSALMS 25; 23; 24; 62; 31:9-17; ROMANS 5:6-8; PSALM 139
2026-03-15

Lent. It wasn't part of my church experience. I don't remember hearing much of anything about it until I got into seminary. But it's also something many churches embrace. I do remember Fifty Day "Spiritual Adventures" led by David Mains years ago. But it's good to focus at this time of year as we remember Jesus heading "resolutely to the cross".

Lent is a time when we're encouraged to look at the weeds in our life and remove the ones we find that take our focus away from Jesus, who died on the cross so we can have eternal life. Three days later He left the tomb, resurrected. It's a time when we refocus so that our own hearts may be reshaped in repentance as we come before God on our journey to the foot of the cross that culminates in victory over sin, death, Satan and hell.

Our **main focus will come from the Psalms.** Let's start with verse 16 and 17 from **Psalm 25:**

"Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish."

Loneliness: Maybe 40% of people are lonely. That's staggering. Have you ever been surrounded by plenty of people, yet still felt lonely? If so you're not alone with that aching. **It's not about how many relationships we have, but how connected we feel within those relationships. I often feel alone.** That really stands out when I'm among a group of non-believers. They often don't think like you do, nor do they have the same values you do. Or they attribute those values to a very different cause. Whereas we see every good and perfect gift coming from God, they see it as chance or humanly deserved. To pick just 1 example, think about family. **Every-one puts family at the top of their priority list.** For us, family is a gift from God for which we express gratitude. For non-believers family is often what they worship—hold highest of all.

Loneliness. You've heard me say many times, **we're never alone.** David is reaching out to God in this Psalm and we can too. We've all lived through defeats and failures and repeatedly pray-ed to God for direction. **Even then you may still feel disconnected.** The key is to keep on pray-ing. Don't stop reaching out. Verse 5 says, *"I wait for you all day long."*

How connected are you? I felt very alone with former hockey teams. Their language and drinking could get to me. Yet they were a group of guys I loved. You can put in your own circumstance where you feel alone. **If you've let opportunities for connecting with others slip away, there's still time to change that.** And more importantly, take time for a heart-to-heart with God. **Sin is our ultimate disconnecter, but God has reconnected us,** reconciled us, made us right with Himself through Jesus. **(Romans 5:6-8)** You can pour yourself—needs and fears—out to Him!

Valleys: Psalm 23. You know the verse by heart: *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”*

For every peak in life there seems to be a valley, or two, or ten. **When everything is going well**, do you find yourself thinking, “This isn’t going to last”? Because, in an instant, things can downturn. The big question is not if it will happen, but **when it does happen**, are you going to look at it as a curse or as a blessing? Again, you’re going to recall your own story. One which comes to mind for me occurred several years ago. After long success in my teaching career, I encountered a principal who couldn’t find anything, and I mean anything, about me that she liked. Wherever I moved the headlight of the locomotive was on me. After three years of it, I’d had enough and moved out, having to basically start all over again. **But, it was this move that opened the door** to becoming a principal myself—something that never would have happened without the valley before. **God enabled me** to help others in a way that never would have been possible in my former role. And, I had a vivid example of what not to do to others!

And, before leaving this psalm, let’s not miss that the Lord is our Shepherd. Sheep graze the higher elevations in the summer in the mountains. If they stayed on the peak, they’d never find the green pastures of the valley. **Left on our own**, we’d bask in the glory of the peak forever. **But our Good Shepherd knows** that pride and arrogance are what really lead us astray; He turns us to the waters of refreshment only found in the valley. **Embrace the valley**—even to death where Christ will safely guide all who believe in Him to live with Him forever.

Broken-heartedness: (Psalm 34) The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (verse 18). **Ouch!** The word conjures up the worst, doesn’t it? We can all relate to something that just shook us to our bootstraps. We’ve been betrayed by someone. Something we’ve poured ourselves into dissolves in an instant. **It looks like there’s no way forward**, no way to continue. You can despair even of life itself. You can even die of a broken heart brought on by sudden, intense stress. **Broken-heartedness is what happens when we die inside.**

Do you think God knows what it’s like to have His heart broken? Well, maybe. **How about** in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve fell into sin? **How about** every time we sin? In spite of that, God continues to deliver us and save us—even while we continue to reject and betray Him. He keeps calling us back and redeems us through the ultimate rejection and betrayal of His Son on the cross. Yes, I think God can relate to your broken-heartedness. **You can safely and confidently hand Him your broken heart.** He knows what to do with it and how to give you peace:

“Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you peace. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me. For I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

You can change life for others. Lift whatever burden you can from them. Offer comfort to the brokenhearted, offer real connection to the lonely and lift those who find themselves in a valley—whether it’s of their own making or not--and give God the glory!

Waiting: Psalm 62:5: *“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him.”* Who loves waiting?—stop and go traffic, grocery lines, in the doctor’s office, test results. Waiting can drive you slowly crazy—or quickly. But then some voice chimes in and says “Well, anything worth having is worth waiting for.” Give me a break! It may be true but it’s also very hard. You know the prayer: “Lord give me patience--now!” Psalm 62 reminds us David frequently waited on the Lord. Well, what did he do as he waited? He wasn’t passive. He actively trusted and prayed. Waiting on the Lord, while challenging, is an act of faith. As we wait we’re reminded anew of our dependence on God—for life, breath, forgiveness, salvation. So, **we wait during Lent**, saddened and repentant, **as Jesus heads resolutely to the cross**—for us. And on the other side of the cross, on the other side of the resurrection, **we wait for His return**, overjoyed and impatient, for Him to bring us truly home. **Our hope is in Him and He will not disappoint us.**

And that’s because Jesus—God—is absolutely trustworthy. From **Psalm 31** that we read, David is in distress—his eyes are weak with sorrow, his soul and body with grief. His life is consumed by anguish and his years by groaning to the point of his bones growing weak. He says he’s become like broken pottery. Yet, the next words out of his mouth are, *“But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, You are my God. My times are in Your hands...Let Your face shine on Your servant; save me in Your unfailing love.”*

Trust. Most of you know I’m a DIY’er—a do it yourself guy. Lots of times things work out OK. But...and Sharon will tell you in no uncertain terms, there are times when she just shakes her head and says, “Why didn’t you get someone who knows what they’re doing?” I can explain.

But when it comes to life’s challenges, I’m way down the road as a DIM’er, **a do-it-my-selver. That’s not how God wants us.** You can hear David’s voice in those few verses of Psalm 31. He pleads with God for mercy and rescue and puts confidence in God as his refuge. Is it just possible that God has put him—us—you/me—in this present plight to reframe our focus and cause us to rethink our motivation? The message would be: **stop trying to do things on our own, and instead trust in God, who can and will accomplish what we could never do.**

God, in and through Jesus, has done what we could not—defeat our enemies—sin, hell, death and Satan. **He accomplished all this and more at the cross. We can trust Him with every-thing**—every challenge, every problem, every worry—and more. Like David, we can say with confidence: *“But I trust in You, O Lord...You are my God.”*

Truth. Do you remember Lily Tomlin acting as 5 ½ year old Edith Ann who concluded every rocking chair monologue with, “And that’s the truth.”—no matter how absurd. **Sounds**

like today. If you don't like the truth, no problem. Just make up your own alternate facts. Every-one seems confident with their own version of the truth. What a mess! People seem blithely blind to the fact that everyone can't have their own version of the truth and be right. **Psalm 25:5, "Lead me in Your truth and teach me." David didn't ask God for his own version of the truth; he asked for God's way.**

You know the old King James' version of the Bible where **Jesus says, "Verily, verily I say unto you..."** Well it's really, *"Truly, truly I say to you."* Do you remember when **Jesus is before Pilate** and says: *"You're right saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* It would have been a good place to end but Pilate, just like us, wants to justify himself with his own version of the truth and answers, **"What is truth?" —as though truth is what anyone determines it to be!** NO! NO! NO! Jesus alone—I mean it. When Jesus says *"I am the way and the truth and the life"* the best Greek translation is *"I and I alone—only Me—am the way and the truth and the life."* Do you want truth in life? Seek Jesus with all your being!

Wonderment. If Psalm 139 doesn't blow you away, nothing will. "You've searched me and You know me!...Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high; I cannot attain it...I praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well...All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be... Your thoughts for me every day outnumber the grains of sand..."

Beloved, this is the God who went **resolutely to the cross** for you and me so that we could live. Don't ever lose sight of the wonder of it all! After you leave here, share with those you encounter: 1) **Who** you are waiting for, 2) **Why** you trust Him, 3) **The absolute truthfulness** that is found only in Jesus and 4) **the wonder of it all**—why He, the God who is over everything, would choose to suffer and die for even you and me!