

Easter Sunday

WORTH THE RISK

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

THE HAPPINESS WHICH God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous

love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.

Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with Him. But there is a difficulty about disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes: you could not be right and He wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source.

Lord, you have trusted us with freedom and rescued us from our sins. May we live now freely and fully in your love. Alleluia!



A CLEAN HEART CREATE IN ME

Daily Lenten Reflections
From
C.S. Lewis

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A CLEAN HEART CREATE IN ME

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) ranks as one of the greatest Christian apologists of the 20th century. A teacher at the two great English universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Lewis had a keen eye for deception and muddled thinking. When it came to spiritual matters, he took on not only the outright atheist, but the lukewarm and halfhearted Christian. Reading him daily during Lent is a bracing and uplifting way to reflect on the progress of our own faith. Accordingly, we are pleased to present this booklet of excerpts from some of Lewis' major works. We have added short prayers at the end of each passage to serve as prayer starters. But the main course is Lewis himself—direct, clever, challenging and devout. May your use of this booklet bring you to a greater appreciation of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Mark Neilsen



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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never safe, but we have plenty of fun, and some ecstasy. It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God: a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bath or a football match, have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.

Lord, I thirst. Fill me with your life.



Sequence of excerpts used:

Ash Wed.	MC	2Mon.	PP	3Sat.	PP	5Thurs.	PP
Thurs.	MC	2Tues.	MC	4th Sun.	PP	5Fri.	PP
Fri.	PP	2Wed.	LM	4Mon.	LM	5Sat.	4L
Sat.	MC	2Thurs.	MC	4Tues.	PP	Passion Sun.	MC
1st Sun.	MC	2Fri.	PP	4Wed.	PP	Holy Week:	
1Mon.	PP	2Sat.	WG	4Thurs.	MC	Mon.	4L
1Tues.	MC	3rd Sun.	MC	4Fri.	MC	Tues.	PP
1Wed.	MC	3Mon.	MC	4Sat.	CR	Wed.	MIR
1Thurs.	MC	3Tues.	MC	5th Sun.	MC	Mndy.Thurs.	LM
1Fri.	MC	3Wed.	MC	5Mon.	MC	Good Fri.	4L
1Sat.	MC	3Thurs.	PP	5Tues.	MC	Holy Sat.	PP
2nd Sun.	MIR	3Fri.	MC	5Wed.	PP	Easter Sun.	MC

Key to abbreviations: PP= *The Problem of Pain* 4L= *The Four Loves*
MC= *Mere Christianity* PP= *The Problem of Pain* CR= *Christian Reflections*
LM= *Letters to Malcolm* WG= *The Weight of Glory*



Mere Christianity

The Weight of Glory



The Problem of Pain

Miracles

These and other books by C.S. Lewis may be purchased through HarperCollins Publisher's website at www.cslewisclassics.com, where you can also find study guides and additional biographical information.

Good Friday

LOVE'S DIAGRAM

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:15-16

GOD, WHO NEEDS NOTHING, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them. He creates the universe, already foreseeing—or should we say “seeing”? there are no tenses in God—the buzzing cloud of flies about the cross, the flayed back pressed against the uneven stake, the nails driven through the mesial nerves, the repeated incipient suffocation as the body droops, the repeated torture of back and arms as it is time after time, for breath’s sake, hitched up. If I may dare the biological image, God is a “host” who deliberately creates His own parasites; causes us to be that we may exploit and “take advantage of” Him. Herein is love. This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves.

Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.

Easter Vigil

JOY, NOT SAFETY

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Isaiah 55:1-2

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE of suffering explains a very curious fact about the world we live in. The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world: but joy, pleasure, and merriment He has scattered broadcast. We are

Ash Wednesday

SOMETHING TO REPENT

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Psalms 51:1-2

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.

Lord Jesus, help me to recognize my sins and to ask forgiveness.

Thursday After Ash Wednesday

LOSS AND GAIN

Then Jesus said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.”

Luke 9:23-24

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 for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.

Lord Jesus, help me to remember that I will lose nothing of value by putting you first and foremost in my life.

Friday After Ash Wednesday

WHOLENESS

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 51:17

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 in so far as they enable the will to put its own house (the passions) in order, as a preparation for offering the whole man to God.

God, help me to remember that your command is to love you with all my heart, all my mind, and all my soul.

Saturday After Ash Wednesday

THEORIES

Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 5:31-32

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.

Maundy Thursday/Holy Thursday

AFFLICTIONS, NOT SINS

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Psalm 116:13-14

SOME PEOPLE FEEL GUILTY about their anxieties and regard them as a defect of faith. I don’t agree at all. They are afflictions, not sins. Like all afflictions, they are, if we can so take them, our share in the Passion of Christ. For the beginning of the Passion—the first move, so to speak—is in Gethsemane. In Gethsemane a very strange and significant thing seems to have happened.

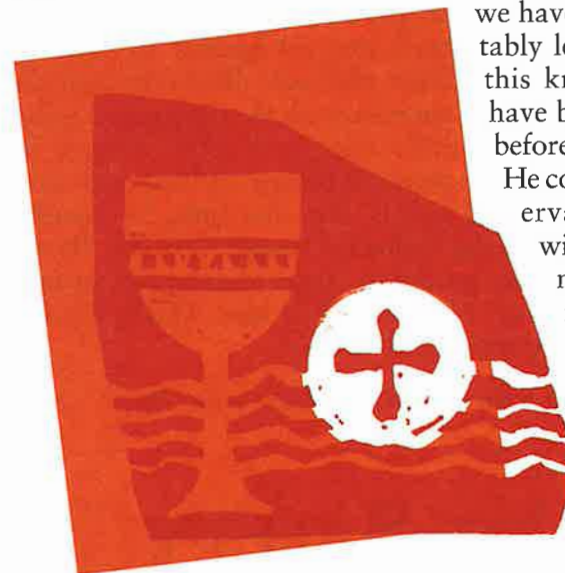
It is clear from many of His sayings that Our Lord had long foreseen His death. He knew what conduct such as His, in a world such as

we have made of this, must inevitably lead to. But it is clear that this knowledge must somehow have been withdrawn from Him before He prayed in Gethsemane.

He could not, with whatever reservation about the Father’s will, have prayed that the cup might pass and simultaneously known that it would not. That is both a logical and psychological impossibility. You see what this involves? Lest any trial incident to humanity should be lacking, the torments of hope—of suspense,

anxiety—were at the last moment loosed upon Him—the possibility that, after all, He might, He just conceivably might, be spared the supreme horror. There was precedent. Isaac had been spared: he too at the last moment, he also against all apparent possibility.

Lord, let us go forth with the same faith in you, regardless of how we feel about it in the moment. Let our faith be faith in you, not in ourselves.



ator—to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature. When it does so, it is good and happy. Lest we should think this a hardship, this kind of good begins on a level far above the creatures, for God Himself, as Son, from all eternity renders back to God as Father by filial obedience the being which the Father by paternal love eternally generates in the Son. This is the pattern man was made to imitate—which Paradisa-



man did imitate—and wherever the will conferred by the Creator is thus perfectly offered back in delighted and delighting obedience by the creature, there, most undoubtedly, is Heaven, and there the Holy Ghost proceeds.

Lord, grant that I may respond to you in love, in the pattern of yielding that you established before time began.

Wednesday of Holy Week

LIFE'S SECRET

I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced.

Isaiah 50:6-7

HUMANITY MUST EMBRACE DEATH freely, submit to it with total humility, drink it to the dregs, and so convert it into that mystical death which is the secret of all life. But only a Man who did not need to have been a Man at all unless He had chosen, only one who served in our sad regiment as a volunteer, yet also only one who was perfectly a Man, could perform this perfect dying; and thus (which way you put it is unimportant) either defeat death or redeem it. He tasted death on behalf of all others. He is the representative “Die-er” of the universe: and for that very reason the Resurrection and the Life.

Lord, you did what terrifies us, and won our redemption. Strengthen our hearts to do what we have to do.

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

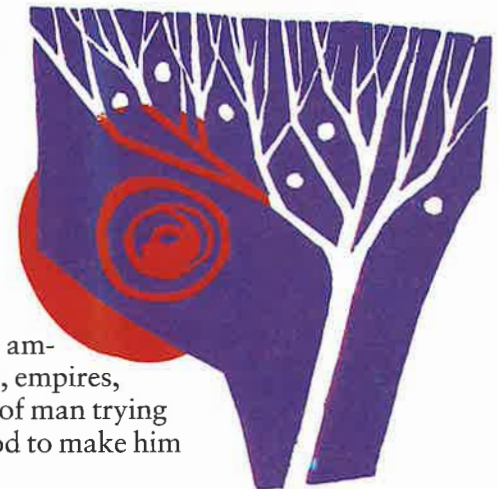
First Sunday of Lent

RUNNING ON GOD

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

Luke 4:1-2

WHAT SATAN PUT INTO the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could “be like gods”—could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God to make him happy.



The reason why it can never succeed is this: God made us, invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

Lord Jesus, help me to remember that I am not God. Most of all, help me to find fulfillment in being your creature.

Monday, first week of Lent

THE ROAD PAST SINAI

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.

Psalm 19:7

SOME MODERN THEOLOGIANS have, quite rightly, protested against an excessively moralistic interpretation of Christianity. The Holiness of God is something more and other than moral perfection: His claim upon us is something more and other than moral duty. I do not deny it, but this conception, like that of corporate guilt, is very easily used as an evasion of the real issue. God may be more than moral goodness: He is not less. The road to the promised land runs past Sinai. The moral law may exist to be transcended: but there is no transcending it for those who have not first admitted its claims upon them, and then tried with all their strength to meet that claim, and fairly and squarely faced the fact of their failure.

Christ Jesus, in you I place my faith, hope and love. Guide me toward the truth: about myself, about the world, about you.

Tuesday, first week of Lent

“ORDINARY” PRAYER

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...
Matthew 6:9

AN ORDINARY SIMPLE Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get in touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers.

Let my prayer come to you, O Lord, in purity and simplicity.

share the humility and suffering of Christ we shall also share in His conquest of death and find a new life after we have died and in it become perfect and perfectly happy creatures. This means something much more than our trying to follow His teaching. People often ask when the next step in evolution—the step to something beyond man—will happen. But on the Christian view, it has happened already. In Christ a new kind of man appeared: and the new kind of life which began in Him is to be put into us.

Lord, help me to humble myself, to become obedient, even unto death, that I might share in your life and your glory.

Monday of Holy Week

LOVING THE LEAST

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 42:6-7

THERE IS A SENSE in which no one can give to God anything which is not already His; and if it is already His what have you given? But since it is only too obvious that we can withhold ourselves, our wills and hearts, from God, we can, in that sense, also give them. What is His by right and would not exist for a moment if it ceased to be His (as the song is the singer's), He has nevertheless made ours in such a way that we can freely offer it back to Him. “Our wills are ours to make them Thine.” And as all Christians know there is another way to giving to God; every stranger whom we feed or clothe is Christ.

Lord, help me to love you in those I see each day, especially the ones I would rather not love.

Tuesday of Holy Week

A MAP OF HEAVEN

The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me.

Isaiah 49:1

THE PROPER GOOD of a creature is to surrender itself to its Cre-

Saturday, fifth week of Lent

LOVE IS RISKY

One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."

John 11:49-50

THERE IS NO SAFE investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.

Lord, thank you for taking the risk of loving us, even unto death.

Passion Sunday

SOMETHING NEW

And being found in human form, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:7-8

THE PERFECT SURRENDER and humiliation were undergone by Christ: perfect because He was God, surrender and humiliation because He was man. Now the Christian belief is that if we somehow



Wednesday, first week of Lent

TURNING AROUND

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Psalms 51:10

WE ALL WANT PROGRESS. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. We have all seen this when doing arithmetic. When I have started a sum the wrong way, the sooner I admit this and go back and start over again, the faster I shall get on. There is nothing progressive about being pigheaded and refusing to admit a mistake. And I think if you look at the present state of the world, it is pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistakes. We are on the wrong road. And if that is so, we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on.

Lord, please let me know the ways I am headed in the wrong direction so that I can turn around at once.

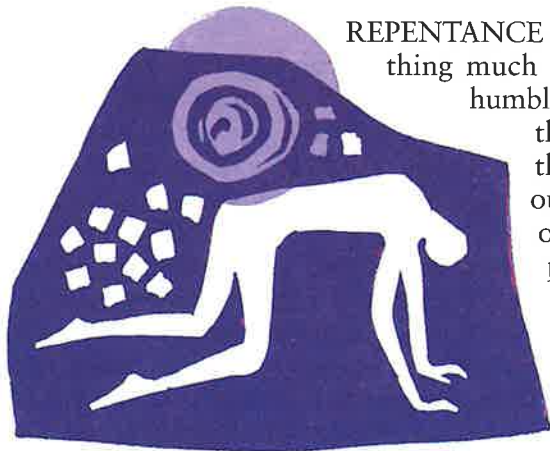


Thursday, first week of Lent

A KIND OF DEATH

The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Psalm 138:8



REPENTANCE IS NO FUN at all. It is something much harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing a part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death. . . .

Remember, this repentance, this willing submission to humiliation and a kind of death, is not something God demands of you

before He will take you back and which He could let you off if He chose: it is simply a description of what going back to Him is like. If you ask God to take you back without it, you are really asking Him to let you go back without going back. It cannot happen.

Help me, Lord, to embrace the burden of repentance that I might grow closer to you.

Friday, first week of Lent

REALLY TRYING

I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20

WE CANNOT DISCOVER OUR FAILURE to keep God's law except by trying our very hardest (and then failing). Unless we really try, whatever we say, there will always be at the back of our minds the idea that, if we try harder next time, we shall succeed in being completely good. Thus, in one sense, the road back to God is a road of moral effort, of trying harder and harder. But in another sense, it is not trying that is

any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no. Again, we are afraid that heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to.

Lord, help me to seek you always and in every place, all the days of my life.

Friday, fifth week of Lent

SELF-GIVING

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

John 10:37-38

IN SELF-GIVING, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives Himself in sacrifice—and that not only on Calvary . . . From before the foundation of the world He surrenders begotten Deity back to getting Deity in obedience. And as the Son glorifies the Father, so also the Father glorifies the Son . . . From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self, to be thereupon yet the more abdicated, and so forever. This is not a heavenly law we can escape by being earthly, nor an earthly law we can escape by being saved. What is outside the system of self-giving is not earth, nor nature, nor "ordinary life," but simply and solely Hell.

Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.



ourselves even in our best moments, and, on the other, that we need not despair even in our worst, for our failures are forgiven. The only fatal thing is to sit down content with anything less than perfection.

Praise you, Lord Jesus Christ, for your great promise.

Wednesday, fifth week of Lent

SALVATION

Then Jesus 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.”

John 8:31-32

THE MOLD IN WHICH a key is made would be a strange thing, if you had never seen a key: and the key itself a strange thing if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. For it is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you—you, individual reader, John Stubbs or Janet Smith. Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him and not another's. All that you are, sins apart, is destined, if you will let God have His good way, to utter satisfaction.

Lord, your desire to save me is more than I can comprehend. Let me grow in gratitude for your saving grace.

Thursday, fifth week of Lent

PIE IN THE SKY?

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually.

Psalms 105:3-4

WE ARE VERY SHY nowadays about even mentioning heaven. We are afraid of the jeer about “pie in the sky,” and of being told that we are trying to “escape” from the duty of making the world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere. But either there is “pie in the sky” or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like

ever going to bring us home. All this trying leads up to the vital moment at which you turn to God and say, “You must do this. I can't.”

God, you are the source of all my strength. In you only do I trust.

Saturday, first week of Lent

WHY FORGIVE

I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:44-45

EVERYONE SAYS FORGIVENESS is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive, as we had during World War II. And then, to mention the subject at all is to be greeted with howls of anger. It is not that people think this too high and difficult a virtue: it is that they think it hateful and contemptible. “That sort of talk makes me sick,” they say. And half of you already want to ask me, “I wonder how you'd feel about forgiving the Gestapo if you were a Pole or a Jew?”

So do I. I wonder very much. Just as when Christianity tells me that I must not deny my religion even to save myself from death by torture, I wonder very much what I should do when it came to the point. I am not trying to tell you in this book what I could do—I can do precious little—I am telling you what Christianity is. I did not invent it. And there, right in the middle of it, I find “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” There is no slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms. It is made perfectly clear that if we do not forgive we shall not be forgiven. There are no two ways about it.

Forgiving Father, give me the spirit of forgiveness even when I would rather nurture my wounds than have them healed.

Second Sunday of Lent

CHOSEN

The Lord brought Abram outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

Genesis 15:5

WHEN WE LOOK INTO the Selectiveness which the Christians attribute to God we find in it none of that "favoritism" which we were afraid of. The "chosen" people are chosen not for their own sake (certainly not for their own honor or pleasure) but for the sake of the unchosen. Abraham is told that "in his seed" (the chosen nation) "all nations shall be blest." That nation has been chosen to bear a heavy burden. Their sufferings are great: but, as Isaiah recognized, their sufferings heal others. On the finally selected Woman falls the utmost depth of maternal anguish. Her Son, the incarnate God, is a "man of sorrows": the one Man into whom Deity descended, the one Man who can be lawfully adored, is preeminent for suffering.

I do not want suffering, Lord, but I want to accept your will.

Monday, second week of Lent

REBELS

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

Daniel 9:9-10

WE ARE NOT MERELY imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are as [John Henry] Newman said, rebels who must lay down our arms. The first answer, then, to the question why our cure should be painful, is that to render back the will which we have so long claimed for our own, is in itself, wherever and however it is done, a grievous pain. Even in Paradise I have supposed a minimal self-adherence to be overcome, though the overcoming, and the yielding, would there be rapturous. But to surrender a self-will inflamed and swollen with years of usurpation is a kind of death.

Death comes in so many shapes, dear Lord! Help me to accept it when there is no way around it.



Monday, fifth week of Lent

NEW SORT OF LIFE

Again Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

THE CHURCH EXISTS for nothing else than to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose. It says in the Bible that the whole universe was made for Christ and that everything is to be gathered together in Him. I do not suppose any of us can understand how this will happen as regards the whole universe. We do not know what (if anything) lives in the parts of it that are millions of miles away from this Earth. Even on this Earth we do not know how it applies to things other than men. After all, that is what you would expect. We have been shown the plan only insofar as it concerns ourselves.

Lord, make me your own this day, in this place, with these people.

Tuesday, fifth week of Lent

ASK FOR HELP

Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress. Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily when I call.

Psalms 102:2

YOU MUST ASK FOR God's help. Even when you have done so, it may seem to you for a long time that no help, or less help than you need, is being given. Never mind. After each failure, ask forgiveness, pick yourself up, and try again. Very often what God first helps us toward is not the virtue itself but just this power of always trying again. For however important chastity (or courage, or truthfulness, or any other virtue) may be, this process trains us in habits of the soul which are more important still. It cures our illusions about ourselves and teaches us to depend on God. We learn, on the one hand, that we cannot trust

our minds are brought before us. The difficulty of such continuing to believe is constantly ignored or misunderstood in discussions of this subject. It is always assumed that the difficulties of faith are intellectual difficulties, that a man who has once accepted a certain proposition will automatically go on believing it till real grounds for disbelief occur. Nothing could be more superficial. How many of the freshmen who come up to Oxford from religious homes and lose their Christianity in the first year have been honestly *argued* out of it? How many of our own sudden temporary losses of faith have a rational basis which would stand examination for a moment? I don't know how it is with others, but I find that mere change of scene always has a tendency to decrease my faith at first—God is less credible when I pray in a hotel bedroom than when I am at College. The society of unbelievers makes Faith harder even when they are people whose opinions, on any other subject, are known to be worthless.

God, strengthen my faith so that the worthless opinions of others will not sway me. May your will be done in me, no matter what.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

JOY UNLIMITED

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Philippians 3:10-12

IF THERE LURKS in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

Lord Jesus Christ, help me to reach as far as I can toward you.

Tuesday, second week of Lent

DELIGHTFUL HUMILITY

The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Matthew 23:11-12

WE MUST NOT THINK Pride is something God forbids because He is offended at it, or that Humility is something He demands as due to His own dignity—as if God Himself was proud . . . He wants you to know Him: wants to give you Himself. And He and you are two things of such a kind that if you really get into any kind of touch with Him you will, in fact, be humble—delightedly humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all the silly nonsense about your own dignity which has made you restless and unhappy all your life.

Lord, help me to see the difference between pride and self-respect.

Wednesday, second week of Lent

AWAKENED BY DESIRE

Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Matthew 25:45-46

SERVILE FEAR IS the lowest form of religion. But a god such that there could never be occasion for even servile fear, a *safe* god, a tame god, soon proclaims himself to any sound mind as a fantasy. I have met no people who fully disbelieved in Hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in Heaven.

There is, I know, a belief in both, which is of no religious significance. It makes these spiritual things, or some travesty of them, objects of purely carnal, prudential, self-centered fear and hope. The deeper levels, those things which only immortal spirit can desire or dread, are not concerned at all . . .

The soul that has once been wakened, or stung, or uplifted by the desire of God, will inevitably (I think) awake to the fear of losing Him.

Dear God, may my fear of losing you always be tempered by confidence in your steadfast love.

Thursday, second week of Lent

THE REAL GIVER

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

Jeremiah 17:5

USUALLY IT IS THOSE who know Him that bring Him to others. That is why the Church, the whole body of Christians showing Him to one another, is so important. You might say that when two Christians are following Christ together there is not twice as much Christianity as when they are apart, but sixteen times as much.

But do not forget this. At first it is natural for a baby to take its mother's milk without knowing its mother. It is equally natural for us to see the man who helps us without seeing Christ behind him. But we must not remain babies. We must go on to recognize the real Giver. It is madness not to. Because, if we do not, we shall be relying on human beings. And that is going to let us down. The best of them will make mistakes; all of them will die. We must be thankful to all the people who have helped us, we must honor them and love them. But never, never pin your whole faith on any human being: not if he is the best and wisest in the whole world. There are lots of nice things you can do with sand; but do not try building a house on it.

Lord, may I always trust you more than mere human beings.

Friday, second week of Lent

BEWARE OF EVASIONS

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.

Matthew 21:43

A REACTION—IN ITSELF wholesome—is now going on against purely private or domestic conceptions of morality, a re-awakening of the social conscience. We feel ourselves to be involved in an iniquitous social system and to share a corporate guilt. This is very true: but the enemy can exploit even truths to our deception. Beware lest you are making use of the idea of corporate guilt to distract your attention from those humdrum, old-fashioned guilts of your own which have nothing to do with “the system” and which can be dealt with without waiting for the

in themselves. What are they to do? The answer is the same as before. Act as if you did. Do not sit trying to manufacture feelings. Ask yourself, “If I were sure that I loved God, what would I do?” When you have found the answer, go and do it.

Lord, grant that I may have the love of you in me and live it in all my actions.

Friday, fourth week of Lent

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.”

John 7:28-29

WHEN CHRISTIANS SAY the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being “in Christ” or of Christ being “in them,” this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them: that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts—that we are His fingers and muscles, the cells of His body. And perhaps that explains one or two things. It explains why this new life is spread not only by purely mental acts like belief, but by bodily acts like baptism and Holy Communion . . . There is no good in trying to be more spiritual than God. God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put the new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not: He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it.

Jesus, may I open myself fully to your Spirit.

Saturday, fourth week of Lent

ENDURANCE

There was a division in the crowd because of him.

John 7:43

I DEFINE FAITH as the power of continuing to believe what we once honestly thought to be true until cogent reasons for honestly changing

Wednesday, fourth week of Lent

REJOICE!

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! for the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

Isaiah 49:13



ALL SADNESS WHICH is not either arising from the repentance of a concrete sin and hastening towards concrete amendment or restitution, or else arising from pity and hastening to active assistance, is simply bad; and I think we all sin by needlessly disobeying the apostolic injunction to "rejoice" as much as anything else. Humility, after the first shock, is a cheerful virtue: it is the high-minded unbeliever, desperately trying in the teeth of repeated disillusion to retain his "faith in human nature," who is really sad.

Lord, may my joy increase as I steadily believe more deeply in your saving deed.

Thursday, fourth week of Lent

ACT IN LOVE

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you.

John 5:39-42

SOME WRITERS USE the word charity to describe not only Christian love between human beings, but also God's love for man and man's love for God. About the second of these two, people are often worried. They are told they ought to love God. They cannot find any such feeling

millennium. For corporate guilt perhaps cannot be, and certainly is not, felt with the same force as personal guilt. For most of us, as we now are, the conception is a mere excuse for evading the real issue. When we have really learned to know our individual corruption, then indeed we can go on to think of the corporate guilt and can hardly think of it too much. But we must learn to walk before we run.

Lord, help me take responsibility for my own moral life.

Saturday, second week of Lent

FORGIVING REAL SIN

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency.

Micah 7:18

A GREAT DEAL OF OUR anxiety to make excuses comes from not really believing in the forgiveness of sins, from thinking that God will not take us to Himself again unless He is satisfied that some sort of case can be made out in our favor. But that would not be forgiveness at all. Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without any excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness, and malice, and nevertheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it. That, and only that, is forgiveness, and that we can always have from God if we ask for it.

Yes, Lord, I am reluctant to admit my sins to you, or to anyone else for that matter. Help me to grow in honesty.



Third Sunday of Lent

A DEEPER CHANGE

So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.

1 Corinthians 10:1

THE TERRIBLE THING, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self—all your wishes and precautions—to Christ. But it is far easier than what we are all trying to do instead. For what we are trying to do is to remain what we call “ourselves,” to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be “good.” We are all trying to let our mind and heart go their own way—centered on money or pleasure or ambition—and hoping, in spite of this, to behave honestly and chastely and humbly. And that is exactly what Christ warned us you could not do. As He said, a thistle cannot produce figs. If I am a field that contains nothing but grass-seed, I cannot produce wheat. Cutting the grass may keep it short: but I shall still produce grass and no wheat. If I want to produce wheat, the change must go deeper than the surface. I must be plowed up and re-sown.

Lead me, Lord, for I cannot lead myself to holiness.

Monday, third week of Lent

EITHER/OR

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove Jesus out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff.

Luke 4:28-29

I AM TRYING HERE to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.

Monday, fourth week of Lent

CELESTIAL GUESSWORK

Be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

Isaiah 65:18

I DON’T SAY THE RESURRECTION of the body will happen all at once. It may well be that this part of us sleeps in death and the intellectual soul is sent to Lenten lands where she fasts in naked spirituality . . . My hope is that we shall return and reassume the wealth we laid down.

Then the new earth and sky, the same yet not the same as these, will rise in us as we have risen in Christ. And once again, after who knows what aeons of silence and the dark, the birds will sing out and the waters flow, and lights and shadows move across the hills and the faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition.

Guesses, of course, only guesses. If they are not true, something better will be. For we know that we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Joy isn’t always easy to come by, Lord, but in you I desire to rejoice.

Tuesday, fourth week of Lent

A CLEAN HEART

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change . . .

Psalms 46:1-2

GOD IS BOTH FURTHER from us, and nearer to us, than any other being...He makes, we are made: He is the original, we derivative. But at the same time, and for the same reason, the intimacy between God and even the meanest creature is closer than any that creatures can attain with one another. Our life is, at every moment, supplied by Him: our tiny, miraculous power of free will only operates in bodies which His continual energy keeps in existence—our very power to think is His power communicated to us.

O Lord, thank you for the many ways you animate me, body and soul. Help me to rely entirely on you, no matter what.

Saturday, third week of Lent

AN EASY SIN

The tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other.

Luke 18:13-14

FROM THE MOMENT a creature becomes aware of God as God and of itself as self, the terrible alternative of choosing God or self for the center is open to it. This sin is committed daily by young children and ignorant peasants as well as by sophisticated persons, by solitaries no less than by those who live in society: it is the fall in every individual life, the basic sin behind all particular sins: at this very moment you and I are either committing it, about to commit it or repenting it.

Lord, I know I choose myself rather than you. I am sorry.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

WHAT GOD WANTS

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

WHAT WOULD REALLY satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, “What does it matter as long as they are contented?” We want, in fact, not so much Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven—a senile benevolence who, as they say, “liked to see young people enjoying themselves,” and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be said at the end of each day, “a good time was had by all.” Not many people, I admit, would formulate a theology in precisely those terms: but a conception not very different lurks at the back of many minds. I do not claim to be an exception: I should very much like to live in a universe which was governed on such lines. But since it is abundantly clear that I don’t, and since I have reason to believe, nevertheless, that God is Love, I conclude that my conception of love needs correction.

Lord Jesus Christ, help me to accept you as you really are.

But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Son of God. I want to rely on you.

Tuesday, third week of Lent

DON'T BE DISCOURAGED

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

Psalm 25:9



ON THE ONE HAND, God’s demand for perfection need not discourage you in the least in your present attempts to be good, or even in your failures. Each time you fall He will pick you up again. And He knows perfectly well that your own ef-

forts are never going to bring you anywhere near perfection. On the other hand, you must realize from the outset that the goal towards which He is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection; and no power in the whole universe, except you yourself, can prevent Him from taking you to that goal. That is what you are in for. And it is very important to realize that. If we do not, then we are very likely to start pulling back and resisting Him after a certain point. I think that many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance are inclined to feel (though we do not put it into words) that we are now good enough. He has done all we wanted Him to do, and we should be obliged if He would now leave us alone. As we say “I never expected to be a saint, I only wanted to be a decent ordinary chap.” And we imagine that when we say this we are being humble.

But this is a fatal mistake. Of course we never wanted, and never asked, to be made into the sort of creatures He is going to make us into. But the question is not what we intended ourselves to be, but what He intended us to be when he made us.

Lord God, I don't want to settle for being "nice" when you offer me holiness. Show me what you would like me to become.

Wednesday, third week of Lent

A HIGHER LEVEL

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:19

WHEN A MAN TURNS to Christ and seems to be getting on pretty well (in the sense that some of his bad habits are now corrected), he often feels that it would now be natural if things went fairly smoothly. When troubles come along—illnesses, money troubles, new kinds of temptation—he is disappointed. These things, he feels, might have been necessary to rouse him and make him repent in his bad old days; but why now? Because God is forcing him on, or up, to a higher level: putting him into situations where he will have to be very much braver, or more patient, or more loving, than he ever dreamed of being before. It seems to us all unnecessary: but that is because we have not yet had the slightest notion of the tremendous thing He means to make of us.

Lord, help me to find you in the troubles of my life, not in wishful thinking about the way things "should" be.

Thursday, third week of Lent

MORE THAN KINDNESS

This is the command I gave to them, "Obey my voice and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it will be well with you."

Jeremiah 7:23

IT IS FOR PEOPLE that we care nothing about that we demand happiness on any terms: with our friends, our lovers, our children, we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptible and estranging modes. If God is Love, He is, by definition, something more than mere kindness. And it appears, from all records, that though He has often rebuked us and condemned us, He has never regarded us with contempt. He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense.

Lord Jesus Christ, son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Friday, third week of Lent

REFORMED BY LOVE

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Hosea 14:1

A LIVE BODY IS not one that never gets hurt, but one that can to some extent repair itself. In the same way a Christian is not a man who never goes wrong, but a man who is enabled to repent and pick himself up and begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside him, repairing him all the time, enabling him to repeat (in some degree) the kind of voluntary death which Christ Himself carried out.

That is why the Christian is in a different position from other people who are trying to be good. They hope, by being good, to please God if there is one; or—if they think there is not—at least they hope to deserve

approval from good men. But the Christian thinks any good he does comes from the Christ-life inside him. He does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.

Lord God, I thank you for desiring that I become good and for giving me the grace to become better.

