March 2025

Lutheran Counseling Services

Church Worker Newsletter

ON THE ROAD WITH JESUS: A LENTEN WORD TO CHURCH WORKERS

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In the Gospel of Luke, we are told that Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Everything that follows is shaped by that resolve. He walks toward rejection, misunderstanding, betrayal, suffering, and ultimately toward the cross.

As church workers, pastors, deacons, musicians, administrators, teachers, and volunteers, we know something about walking hard roads. Lent often meets us not only in liturgy, but in staff meetings, hospital rooms, budget shortfalls, congregational conflict, and the quiet fatigue of long obedience. We see how deeply discipleship and emotional life intertwine. The road to the cross is not abstract theology; it is a lived narrative. Lent invites us to notice the stories shaping us, and to allow Christ to gently re-author them in grace.

Lent is not a performance review of our discipleship. It is a journey of accompaniment. The same Christ who set his face toward Jerusalem sets his face toward you, in compassion, not condemnation. Transformation happens not when we try harder, but when we allow ourselves to be honestly known in the presence of steady love.

Below are reflections and narrative journaling practices for each week in March. I encourage you to set aside 15-20 minutes each week to write, reflect, and pray. Narrative work is not about self-improvement; it is about noticing where Christ is already at work in your story.

This March, may you discover again that you are not merely leading others down the road to the cross. You are being led. And the One who calls you to lose your life is the One who promises that nothing given in love is ever lost.

Grace and peace to you in this holy season.

MARCH 1, 2026: SECOND WEEK OF LENT
LOSING LIFE TO FIND IT

Read: Luke 9:18–27

Peter's confession is bold: "You are the Messiah." Yet when Jesus speaks of suffering, Peter resists. Like Peter, many of us can proclaim Christ clearly until the cross becomes personal. Church work can subtly train us in self-preservation: protecting reputation, avoiding criticism, managing perception, over-functioning to stay indispensable. Jesus reframes life itself: "Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it." From a clinical perspective, self-protection is understandable. It often grows from earlier wounds. But spiritually, Lent asks: What if surrender is not annihilation, but liberation?

Narrative Journaling Exercise

1. **Name the Self-Protective Story** - Complete this sentence: "If I don't hold everything together, then…" What fear lives underneath that belief?
2. **Externalize the Fear** - Give your self-protective instinct a name (e.g., "The Protector," "The Performer," "The Pleaser"). How has it tried to help you? When does it overstep?
3. **Re-author with Christ** - Where might Jesus be inviting you to loosen your grip? Write a short prayer beginning: "Lord, if losing my life means…"

MARCH 8, 2026: THIRD WEEK IN LENT
"PERSISTENT FAITH, OPEN HANDS"

Read: Luke 18:1-17

Jesus speaks of persistent prayer and childlike trust. On the road to Jerusalem, he commends faith that keeps knocking and hands that remain open. Many church workers struggle quietly with prayer, not because we don't believe, but because we are tired. We carry others' crises. We preach hope while privately wrestling with discouragement. Persistence is not emotional intensity. It is relational staying. In therapy, I often remind clients: secure attachment grows not from perfection, but from consistent return. So it is with God.

Narrative Journaling Exercise
Trace Your Prayer Story - Write briefly about a season when prayer felt alive. What was different then?
Name the Current Obstacle - If your current prayer life had a voice, what would it say? Is it weary? Cynical? Distracted?
Practice Open-Handed Prayer - Physically open your hands as you write: *"God, today I bring you..."* List concerns without editing. End with: *"And I release the outcome to you."*

MARCH 15, 2026: FOURTH WEEK IN LENT
"SAVED AND CHANGED"

Read: Luke 19:1-10

When Jesus encounters Zacchaeus, he sees him, calls him by name, and invites himself into his home. Salvation is not abstract forgiveness; it is relational restoration. In ministry, we often preach grace fluently. But we may struggle to receive it personally. Many church workers live under an internalized narrative: I should be further along by now. Zacchaeus' story reminds us that transformation begins with being seen.

Narrative Journaling Exercise

1. **Climb the Tree** - Where do you feel small, hidden, or ashamed in your ministry right now? Describe that place honestly.
2. **Hear Your Name** - Imagine Jesus looking up and calling you by name. What tone is in his voice? What does he say next?
3. **Identify One Concrete Change** - Zacchaeus responds with action. What small act of restoration might flow naturally, not from guilt, but from gratitude?

MARCH 22, 2026: FIFTH WEEK IN LENT
"THE WAY OF THE CROSS-SHAPED LIFE"

Read: Luke 22:24-27

James and John seek glory. Jesus offers a cup. He redefines greatness as servanthood and authority as self-giving love. In church systems, power can become subtle and spiritualized. We may not seek thrones, but we may seek control, recognition, or certainty. From a family systems lens, anxiety often drives our grasping. The cross-shaped life is not passive. It is courageous love poured out without coercion.

Journaling Exercise

1. **Name Your "Cup"** - What difficult responsibility, relationship, or decision feels like a cup you would rather not drink?
2. **Explore Your Longing for Glory** - Where do you most desire affirmation? What story does that longing tell about your deeper need?
3. **Rewrite Greatness** - Finish this sentence: "In Christ's kingdom, greatness in my ministry might look like..."
   Notice how this differs from worldly metrics.

MARCH 29, 2026: PALM SUNDAY & HOLY WEEK
"THE KING WHO WEEPS AND REIGNS FROM THE CROSS"

Read: Luke 19:28-44

On Palm Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem to shouts of "Hosanna!" Yet he weeps over the city. The crowd expects triumph. He rides toward suffering. The temptation in ministry is to crave the cheers and avoid the tears. We long for visible success, growing attendance, grateful parishioners, measurable impact. But Jesus reigns not from spectacle, but from the cross. As Holy Week begins, we are invited to examine which king we are following: the one of applause or the one of mercy.

Journaling Exercise

1. **Identify Your Hosannas** - What forms of affirmation feel most life-giving to you? When have you relied on them too heavily?
2. **Sit with the Tears** - What in your congregation, or your own life, makes you want to weep? Write without fixing.
3. **Follow the True King** - Complete this prayer: "*Jesus, humble King, reign in me by...*"
   Ask for the courage to follow him beyond applause.