

LENT (Season of Lent: February 22–April 7, 2012)

Sunday, February 26, 2012

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The unit you are viewing, Lent, is a compact unit. This means that it is not a complete commentary of the Scripture selected for this moment on the calendar, nor does it have full supporting cultural resource and worship units. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided a sermonic outline, songs, suggested books, and suggested articles, links, and videos. For additional information, see Lent in the archives of the Lectionary for 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011. 2012 is the second year that the African American Lectionary has posted compact units for moments on its liturgical calendar.

I. Description of the Liturgical Moment

LENT: ASH WEDNESDAY ▶ MAUNDY THURSDAY ▶ GOOD FRIDAY ▶ HOLY SATURDAY

Lent¹ is a 40-day period that begins on Ash Wednesday and extends through Holy Saturday, the day before Resurrection Sunday (Easter). Since, in some way, we celebrate the resurrection of Christ every Sunday, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted among the 40 days. The last week of Lent, Holy Week, includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Maundy Thursday (also referred to as Holy Thursday) commemorates the Last Supper, during which Jesus shared the Passover Meal with his disciples; this took place the night before Jesus was crucified. Given the focus of this liturgical moment, it is extremely important to recall what Jesus did after the Meal: He washed the feet of his disciples (John 13:5). By performing this lowly act, Jesus demonstrated how Christians are to love one another in humility and through service.

Jonathan Chrism, who prepared the African American Lectionary Cultural Resource unit for Lent in 2009, reminds us of the ecclesiastical history of Lent:

In the second century, Lent was the period in which Roman Catholic converts (catechumens) went through an intense process in preparation for baptism at the Easter Vigil. Over the next few centuries, the tedious process of the catechumens began to diminish; as a result, during the fourth century, Lent became a 40-day period of penitence and fasting for all Christians, not only converts. In A.D. 325, the Council of Nicaea referred to Lent as a 40-day period that precedes Easter on the Christian calendar. The number 40 is significant in light of Jesus' 40-day period of fasting in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry (Matthew 4:1-2, Luke 4:1-2).

Among many 21st century North American Christians, self-denial, charity, and devotion are hallmarks of discipleship development. We believe that our Lenten sacrifices highlight the sacrifices of and demonstrate our solidarity with Christ. Therefore, during Lent, we typically pray, worship, meditate, read Scriptures, fast, and abstain from various creature comforts with amplified intentionality. Lent is typically understood to be a season of spiritual renewal and reflection. Mark Jefferson, who wrote the 2011 African American Lectionary Compact Unit for Lent, reminds us that "African American Christians who follow the liturgical calendar, such as Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and United Methodists, often value Lent as a time for embracing physical weakness through deliberate self-denial in order to gain spiritual strength in Christ."

John Guns, who wrote the 2008 African American Lectionary Commentary for Lent, challenges the black church to embrace Lenten practices that merge self-denial with service to others:

One of the weightier challenges for the African American preacher is to convince the average worshipper to embrace a life of meaningful sacrifice coupled with authentic redemptive service to others. This mandate for sacrifice has become challenging because much of the preaching today focuses on the individual and the pursuit for more. . . . For many, the word sacrifice is an unwelcome intruder, demanding more than we have a desire to give. Yet throughout our history, sacrifice has been a staple of our struggles against oppression and the dehumanizing treatment of our oppressors. The Lenten season within the African American church context should not only be a time of self-denial but also a season of sacrifice where one is inspired to embrace the spirit of modesty and service.

Like Dr. Guns, Luke Powery, the Lectionary commentator for Lent in 2009, contends that for the black church, the Lenten season must take on a special meaning:

Sometimes, one may hear people giving up something during Lent as a spiritual exercise, such as eating certain kinds of food, watching television, or surfing the internet daily. I

think it is crucial that black churches, rather than give up something, give something, do something, or say something that speaks to the sufficient grace of God which we sorely need and desire as Christians. In this penitential season, as we give ourselves to God, we receive so much more.

With this material as our backdrop, we provide a sermon outline for Lent for 2012.

II. Lent: Sermonic Outline

A. Sermonic Focus Text(s): Mark 1:12-15 (New Revised Standard Version)

(v. 12) And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. (v. 13) He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. (v. 14) Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, (v. 15) and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’

B. Possible Titles

- i. A Closer Walk
- ii. Authentic Discipleship
- iii. Serving in the Wilderness

C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry

In any text there can be several words or phrases that require significant exegetical inquiry. One exegetical inquiry raised by this text is the verb *minister*. The Greek word for minister is *diakaneo*, from which we get diaconate and deacon (Acts 6:1-8). The range of meanings include: to be a servant, attendant, domestic; to wait at a table and offer food and drink to guests; to supply food and necessities of life; to take care of, distribute, the things necessary to sustain life; to take care of the poor and the sick; to attend to anything that may serve another’s interests. The verb *minister* is used 32 times in the New Testament, and it appears a total of 20 times in the Gospels and Acts.

All believers are ministers and are to do ministry. This work is not limited to clergy, deacons, elders, or stewards. Each and every believer has been called to *serve* in some capacity. Every Christian is full of potential for service (ministry), through gifts given by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts come as a result of spiritual birth and they are to be used in and through the church (Ephesians 4:11-13).

III. Introduction

It’s that time again! It’s the season when the question of the day is: What are you giving up for Lent? Lenten sacrifices, like New Year resolutions, are discussed around water coolers at work,

among family and friends, and during informal gatherings at church. Even among non-churchgoers, and perhaps non-believers, it has become fashionable, vogue, the “in-thing” to at least attempt to give up something for Lent. These days, fast food, sweets, television, credit card spending, and internet surfing appear to be among the popular Lenten restrictions. During this season, some of us will also deliberately spend more time praying, reading Scriptures, and worshipping God.

While self-denial and personal times of devotion are extremely important Christian spiritual disciplines, if we seriously desire a “closer walk,” if we want a more intimate relationship with our Lord and Savior, if we want to be authentic disciples of Jesus Christ, we must also embrace a lifestyle of hospitality and service to others. And there’s no better time to begin than today, as we enter the 2012 Lenten season.

It is sad reflection of Christian discipleship that so many of us church folk have fallen prey to the self-centered, gluttonous, materialistic, and individualistic nature of this world. We don’t want to be challenged, we don’t want to stretch, and we really don’t want to leave our comfort zones. Far too many of us, from the pulpit to the parking lot, won’t leave the four walls of the church to minister to (serve) folks in our communities. Neither do we truly minister (show hospitality) to “others” who make their way to our houses of worship. Even during Lent, the season during which our relationship with Christ is to be revived and renewed, the spiritual disciplines we embrace are, for the most part, void of service to others.

Yet, Jesus himself, boldly states in the 10th chapter of Mark: *For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* Authentic Christian discipleship means that what God calls us to do will not always be comfortable, and will rarely be convenient. Authentic Christ-centered discipleship demands that we challenge worldly thinking and actions. Authentic discipleship that points to the all-sufficient grace of God requires that we live to serve!

No doubt, we have plenty of excuses: “I don’t have time. . . . I’m tired. . . . I’ve got kids, a job, and school; my plate is full. . . . Let the young folks do it. . . . I can’t help anyone else, I need help myself. . . . God can’t use me, my life is too messed up. . . . I’m doing good to get to church and I come to Bible Study during the week, isn’t that enough? . . . One excuse after the other. . . . The road to hell is paved with excuses. . . . And I’m afraid a lot of us are strolling down that path!

However, I am the bearer of Good News today—news you can use. It’s right here in our text. Jesus, whom the Gospel writer identifies as the suffering servant, sheds light on some of the attributes that will aid us in being God-centered servants.

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point One – Embracing those different than us can be a wilderness experience. Accepting God’s “push” to embrace, welcome, care for, love, and serve people we do not know, people who don’t look like or talk like us, people who don’t appear to have the same lifestyles and values that we have, can feel like a wilderness experience.

a. Resist temptation

During our wilderness experiences we are likely to be tempted by Satan to give up, to retreat to our places of comfort and safety. Notice that Jesus did not yield to Satan's temptations; neither should we.

b. Restrain fear

During our wilderness experiences, our initial response may be fear. Perhaps the people whom we have been called to serve may appear to be too much to handle. If we lovingly accept the people we serve, get to know them, and genuinely care about them, we will often receive love and care from them in return. Notice that though Jesus was *with* wild beasts, the beasts did not devour him.

c. Recognize Immanuel

During our wilderness experiences, God is with us. The Holy Spirit *drove* Jesus *out into the wilderness*. God never gives us an assignment without providing a means for us to fulfill it. Just as Jesus did not have to face the wilderness experience alone, we too have *Immanuel*.

Move/Point Two – After resisting Satan, Jesus went to Galilee, where he continued the ministry that John the Baptist had begun.

We must:

a. Persevere

While we may grow tired and weary, we are much stronger and more firmly grounded in Christ after having resisted temptation. Trials and tribulations are stepping stones, not stumbling blocks. Making it through the wilderness experiences of life can be among the motivators that drive us to serve and care for others. We preach, teach, and serve out of our brokenness.

b. Remember

As African Americans we must remember that we come from a legacy of service to others. That legacy allowed us to experience the grace and mercy of God in the midst of oppression. We are standing on the shoulders of many who gave their lives for the benefits we often take for granted. We must serve with humility, never forgetting those who came before us, those who paved the way.

c. Proclaim

No matter how difficult life gets for us and for those we serve, we must know and believe, preach and teach, live and embody, the Good News of God, the Gospel.

Move/Point Three – We are called to embrace the Good News and to serve others.

We can do this if we:

a. Recognize God's timing

First Jesus declares that time is fulfilled (*kairos*). It's the time that the prophets Isaiah (40:3) and Malachi (3:1) had spoken about. The time of waiting is over and the decisive moment has arrived

when God's rule will be established. As we minister to others, we allow ourselves and those we serve to experience *kairos* moments.

b. Serve under God's power and authority

Jesus stated that the Kingdom of God (*basileia*) or the Kingdom of Heaven (see the Gospel of Matthew) had arrived. The Kingdom of God may refer to the present, as well as to the future. In our text, the reference is to the present. The Kingdom of God refers to God's rule, reign, and authority in the lives of believers. As disciples of Jesus, we offer a glimpse of the Kingdom to those we serve.

c. Are prepared to lead someone to Christ

As opportunities present themselves, repent and believe must be the message we bring to those we serve. Jesus left the wilderness to prepare others to follow him.

V. Challenge

While Lent has evolved into a season during which we give something up, let us strive to be authentic disciples of Jesus Christ by also putting something positive in place. During this Lenten season, let's make a collective commitment to leave our comfort zones and reach out and touch someone in need, take a stand for justice, show hospitality to people we don't know, help the poor, visit the sick, or visit someone in prison whom we do not know. Oh, how powerful the Church will be if we do this during the Lenten Season and throughout the year! Each of us has the capacity to do great things for Christ by serving others! We have the capacity to spread the Good News of Christ in word and in deed.

Join me in singing this familiar song of the Church:

If I can help somebody
As I travel along
If I can help somebody
With a word or song
If I can help somebody
From doing wrong
My living shall not be in vain.

My living shall not be in vain
My living shall not be in vain
If I can help somebody
While I'm singing this song
My living shall not be in vain.²

VI. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in This Passage

Sounds: (v. 12) feet running over a dusty path; (v. 13) tempting, enticing, and alluring sounds of Satan; the screams, grunts, and groans of wild animals; (v. 14) closing

of a jail cell, moans of sadness, people rejoicing; (v. 15) Jesus preaching;

Sights: (v. 12) Dusty, dry wilderness; Jesus being driven into the wilderness; (v. 13) Jesus in the wilderness, wild beasts surrounding but never bothering or touching Jesus; angels talking to Jesus, giving him water to drink and wiping his forehead in the heat of the desert; (v. 14) John being arrested, sad faces in a crowd of people; (v. 15) Jesus preaching with authority, using bold and powerful gestures; and

Colors: (v. 13) The dull, dingy clothing of Satan (rusty brown, dirty white, dusty grey), and the bright colorful clothing of the angels (red, gold, orange, purple).

VII. Illustration(s)

Abyssinian Soup Kitchen

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (1908–1972) will long be remembered for many things: preaching and picketing for job opportunities, his newspaper columns, his rise and fall as Harlem’s first congressman, his civil rights activities, and for pastoring Abyssinian Baptist Church. But before he started making the headlines, Powell was feeding the folks in the breadline at his father’s church in Harlem during the Great Depression.

Every evening, as dark spread over Harlem, the needy would be summoned to church to eat and to get shoes and clothing, and the young minister (Powell, Jr.) would shake hands and pat backs and get to know the men and women... In a few short months, young Powell and his staff had provided 28,500 free meals and given away an estimated 17,000 pieces of clothing and 2,000 pairs of shoes... feeding the hungry and appealing to the congregation for collections were much more vital than sitting at a desk.

—Wil Haygood in Barboza, Steven (ed.)
The African American Book of Values: Classic Moral Stories, pp. 736–739

The Great Rewards of Earning \$50 a Month

I learned a significant lesson during my brief tour as associate director of the Peace Corps. We set high standards for volunteers, but to our surprise we could have filled all of our available positions with volunteers from Los Angeles and New York alone. The finest college graduates in the country wanted a chance to engage in hard work on another continent in a developing country without modern conveniences among persons of another culture, sharing the local fare with mostly poor and illiterate people, for a salary of fifty dollars a month! They found the challenge so fulfilling that when their two-year tour ended, they had to be forced to return home. In this experience I saw many of Christ’s teachings fulfilled. When we give freely, we receive freely. When we seek to save our own lives, we lose them; but when we lose our lives for Christ’s sake, we truly find them.

—Samuel Proctor in Proctor, Samuel D. and Gardner C. Taylor
We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor’s Vocation.

This illustration is taken from the Sermon Illustrations section of the African American Lectionary. Please view the Lectionary Sermon Illustrations for additional illustrations.

VIII. Lenten Poems

The Ballad of Mary's Son

By Langston Hughes

It was in the Spring
The Passover had come.
There was feasting in the streets and joy.
But an awful thing
Happened in the Spring –
Men who knew not what they did
Killed Mary's Boy.
He was Mary's Son,
And the Son of God was He –
Sent to bring the whole world joy.
There were some who could not hear,
And some were filled with fear –
So they built a cross
For Mary's Boy.

God Be in My Head

Anonymous

God be in my head
And in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes
And in my looking;
God be in my mouth
And in my speaking;
God be in my heart
And in my thinking;
God be at mine end,
And at my departing.

Imperatives, Part 2 of Mysteries of the Incarnation⁴

By Kathleen Norris

Look at the birds⁵
Consider the lilies⁶
Drink ye all of it⁷

Ask⁸
Seek
Knock
Enter by the narrow gate⁹
Do not be anxious¹⁰
Judge not,¹¹
do not give dogs what is holy¹²
Go: be it done for you¹³
Do not be afraid¹⁴
Maiden, arise¹⁵
Young man, I say, arise¹⁶

Stretch out your hand¹⁷
Stand up,¹⁸
be still¹⁹
Rise, let us be going ...

- * 1. Love
- ** 2. Forgive
- *** 3. Remember me.

IX. Songs to Accompany This Sermon

A. Opening Hymn

- I Am on the Battlefield for My Lord. By Sylvana Bell and E.V. Banks. Tune, (BATTLEFIELD).

B. Well-known Song(s)

- My Life, My Love, My All. By Kirk Franklin
- We Thirst for You. By John Ragsdale, Jr.
- He Wants It All. By Dominique Jones
- Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand. By Nicholas Ashford and Valerie Simpson
Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ui_EmVOcYIE
- Jesus Is Love. By Lionel Richie
Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfrPZ2eMjDo&feature=related>

C. Spiritual(s)

- Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone. By Thomas Shepard. Tune by George N. Allen. For male quartet

Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHIA9xHQz4s&feature=related>

- Calvary. Negro Spiritual

Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKzE7jN8GsE&feature=fvst>

- The Angel Rolled the Stone Away. Negro Spiritual. Arr. by Charlene Moore Cooper

D. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2011)

- Sacrifice of Praise. By Alvin Slaughter

- Sacrifice. By Karen Clark Sheard

- I Give Myself Away. By William McDowell

Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7ofQmeao9I>

- Feeling Good. By Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse

E. Liturgical Dance Music

- What a Sacrifice. By Gina M. Wright

- Here Is Our Praise. By Freda Battle

F. Offertory Song

- Thank You. By Walter Hawkins

Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0bl7cG1vfQ>

G. Sermonic Selection

- Just a Closer Walk with Thee. Anonymous

The video features a little-known version of the song by Ella Fitzgerald.

Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3vTNPPMa9c&feature=related>

H. Invitational Song

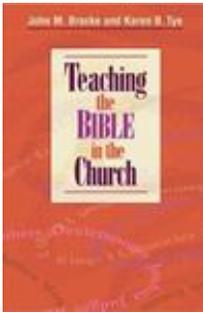
- If I Can Help Somebody. By Alma Bazel Androzzo. Arr. by Nathan Carter. For choir

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UIGgqiJM4Q&feature=related>

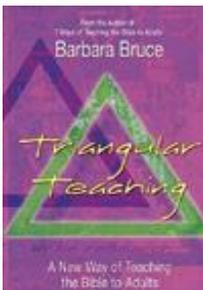
X. Videos, Audio, and/or Interactive Media

- Today's video, A Reflection for Lent, was prepared by Christine Sine. Online location: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gePC_XfXujE accessed 10 October 2011.
- A sermon on Lent by Rev. Carlye Hughes. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuw4DT1iiOE> accessed 10 October 2011.
- Conclusion of the sermon "The Message of Lent: What Are You Prepared to Do?" by Overseer Ivry Johnson, Sr. Online location: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9OM6R_szsk accessed 10 October 2011.

XI. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons or Bible Studies Related to Lent



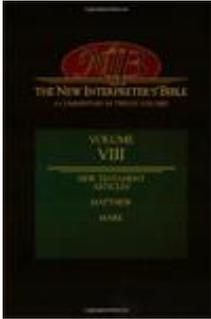
Bracke, John M. and Tye, Karen B. Teaching the Bible in Church. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003.



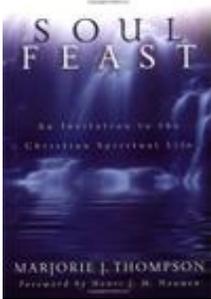
Bruce, Barbara. Triangular Teaching: A New Way of Teaching the Bible to Adults. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007.



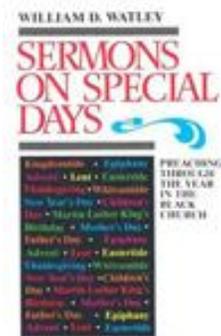
Foster, Richard J. Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998.



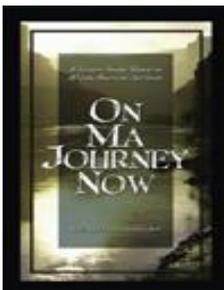
The New Interpreter's Bible (Volume 8). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.



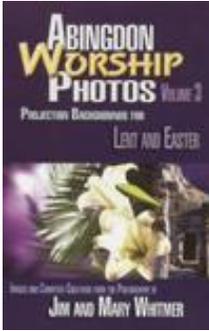
Thompson, Marjorie J. Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.



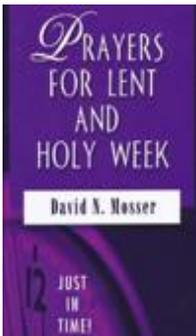
Watley, William D. Sermons on Special Days: Preaching through the Year in the Black Church. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1987.



Brown-Felder, Gwendolyn. On Ma Journey Now, Student: A Lenten Study Based on African American Spirituals. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.



Whitmer, Jim and Mary Whitmer. Abingdon Worship Photos, Volume 3: Projection Backgrounds for Lent and Easter. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.



Mosser, David N. Just in Time! Prayers for Lent and Holy Week. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010.

XII. Links to Helpful Websites for Lent

- Wyvetta Bullock and Julia Speller, “Lent and Easter” in Celebration of the Liturgical Church Year from an African American Perspective, an online informational document from the National Council of Churches. Online location: http://www.nccusa.org/nmu/mce/lent_and_easter.pdf accessed 28 September 2011
- Ted Olsen, “The Beginning of Lent.” Online location: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/news/2004/lent.html> accessed 10 October 2011
- “The Season of Lent: Prayer, History and Customs.” Online location: <http://www.churchyear.net/lent.html> accessed 9 October 2011
- Dennis Bratcher, “The Season of Lent.” Online location: <http://www.crivoice.org/cylent.html> accessed 1 October 2011
- “Parent Guide to Teaching Your Children about Lent.” Online location: <http://www.marshall.org/pdf/childrenAndLent.pdf> accessed 13 October 2011
- Resources for celebrating Lent by the Reformed Church in America. Online location: <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=2642> accessed 11 October 2011

- Lent celebration ideas for children of the Catholic Faith. **This material also contains numerous ideas that can be used by any Protestant faith community.** Online location: http://catholicmom.com/kids_lent_activities.htm accessed 11 October 2011

XIII. Notes for Select Songs

A. Opening Hymn

- I Am on the Battlefield for My Lord. By Sylvana Bell and E.V. Banks. Tune, (BATTLEFIELD).
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #480

B. Well-known Song(s)

- My Life, My Love, My All. By Kirk Franklin
Location:
The Rebirth of Kirk Franklin. Inglewood, CA: Epic, 2002.
- We Thirst for You. By John Ragsdale, Jr.
Location:
Winans, CeCe. Throne Room. Brentwood, TN: Puresprings Gospel, 2003.
- He Wants It All. By Dominique Jones
Location:
Forever Jones. Get Ready. Brentwood, TN: EMI Gospel, 2010.
- Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand. By Nicholas Ashford and Valerie Simpson
Location:
Ross, Diana. Diana Ross: The Definitive Collection. New York, NY: HIP-0 Records, 2006.
- Jesus Is Love. By Lionel Richie
Location:
Richie, Lionel. 20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection. Detroit, MI: Motown, 2003.

C. Spiritual(s)

- Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone. By Thomas Shepard. Tune by George N. Allen. For male quartet

Location:

Cooke, Sam and the Soul Stirrers. In the Beginning. UK: Ace Records UK, 1998.

African American Heritage Hymnal. #554

- Calvary. Negro Spiritual

Location:

Zion Still Sings for Every Generation. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. #73

- The Angel Rolled the Stone Away. Negro Spiritual. Arr. by Charlene Moore Cooper

Location:

African American Heritage Hymnal. #279

D. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2011)

- Sacrifice of Praise. By Alvin Slaughter

Location:

The Faith Life. New York, NY: Integrity, 2005.

- Sacrifice. By Karen Clark Sheard

Location:

2nd Chance. New York, NY: Atlantic, 2007.

- I Give Myself Away. By William McDowell

Location:

As We Worship Live. New York, NY: eOne, 2009.

- Feeling Good. By Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse

Location:

Hudson, Jennifer. Feeling Good (MP3 format). Los Angeles, CA: Arista, 2010.

E. Liturgical Dance Music

- What a Sacrifice. By Gina M. Wright

Location:

Saints with a Vision. Calling All Saints. Chicago, IL: Meek Records, 2003.

- Here Is Our Praise. By Freda Battle

Location:

Here Is Our Praise. Boston, MA: Axiom Records, 2006.

F. Offertory Song

- Thank You. By Walter Hawkins
Location:
Walter Hawkins, Love Alive IV. Jackson, MS: Malaco Records, 1990.

G. Sermonic Selection

- Just a Closer Walk with Thee. Anonymous
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #455

H. Invitational Song

- If I Can Help Somebody. By Alma Bazel Androzzo. Arr. by Nathan Carter. (For choirs)
Location:
Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94wUmhHLC5I&feature=related>

Online location: (For soloists)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UIGgqiJM4Q&feature=related>

Notes

1. The word Lent comes from an Anglo Saxon term that means spring. In Latin, the word for Lent is *quadragesima*, which means forty days; in Greek, it's *tessarakoste*, meaning fortieth. In Old English, Lent is *lencten*, which means "lengthen." *Lencten* refers to the lengthening of the daylight hours that occurs in the northern hemisphere as spring approaches. It is during this period of transition, from late winter to early spring, that the season of Lent falls. See www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lent.

2. http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/m/mahalia_jackson/if_i_can_help_somebody.html

3. Hughes, Langston. "The Ballad of Mary's Son." The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes. New York, NY: Vintage, 1995.

4. Norris, Kathleen. "Imperatives, Part 2" of "Mysteries of the Incarnation." Journey: New and Selected Poems 1969–1999. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.

Scriptures in the Poem:

5. Matthew 6:26. See also Luke 12:24, "Consider the ravens."

6. Matthew 6:28; Luke 12:27.

7. "Drink from it, all of you" (Matthew 26:27). Norris uses the King James translation here.

8. This stanza is a series of Jesus' commands from the Sermon on the Mount: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7, King James; also Luke 11:9).

9. Matthew 7:13-14; also Luke 13:23-24.

10. Matthew 6:25, 31; Luke 12:22, 29.

11. Matthew 7:1; Mark 4:24; Luke 6:37-38.

12. Matthew 7:6.

13. Matthew 8:13.

14. "Do not be afraid"—a frequent command by Jesus; for example, Matthew 10:31; 14:27; 17:7; 28:10.

15. The healing of Jairus's daughter: "Little girl, get up!" (Mark 5:41; also Luke 8:54).

16. The healing the widow's only son: Luke 7:14.

17. The healing of the man with the withered hand: Matthew 12:13; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11.

18. Jesus' healing the paralyzed man: Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26.

19. Jesus' command to the ocean: Mark 5:39; also Matthew 8:26; Luke 8:24, 27.

* Jesus to his disciples in Gethsemane: "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matthew 26:46; Mark 14:42).

** Jesus' two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39; also Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28).

*** Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 17:4.