

During Lent, we are inviting our congregation to spend time in God's word. Once a week, we will guide this time with a devotional reading from Scripture and a reflection from someone within our church family. Begin by centering yourself in prayer; ask God to reveal something new and speak to you today. Next, spend time reading the Scripture passage for the day, noting what stands out to you and what word from the Lord might be coming through the text for *you*. Then, move to reading the reflection shared below. Below, you will see that we have also included a piece of visual art for you to consider as you reflect on the passage. I (Pastor Ashley) encourage you to actually get out your Bible and engage with the text on your own first, before reading the reflections shared below. Also, we would love to hear what God was saying to you through this passage! Comment on our [Facebook post](#) for today with what stood out to you from the Scripture passage.

Lenten Devotional: Week Seven

Step One: *Prior to reading the Scripture passage, spend a moment centering yourself in prayer.*

Step Two: Our Scripture reading today is **John 18:15-27**. Read through the text (maybe even twice), noting what stands out to you and what word from the Lord might be coming through this text for *you* today.

Step Three: Now, enjoy this reflection from our wonderful Children's Minister, Karen Kirkman:

The Way of Jesus is Difficult

When I first read this week's Holy Week devotional story, I focused my attention on Peter - the passage is often referred to as Peter's Denial. He was one of only two disciples that had followed Jesus after his arrest all the way to the temple courts, the others had fearfully fled. Peter, one of Jesus' most loyal, exuberant, confident, and outspoken disciples, whom I often relate to. Peter, the former fisherman, known as the disciple's leader, the one on whom Jesus said the church will be built.



"The Cross Remains" by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman
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Then I re-read Pastor Ashley's suggestions for our Lent devotional writers: "*Our sermon series is "The Way of Jesus", looking for stories about how Jesus lives and loves from John's Gospel. It would be great if the Lenten devotionals could still follow that theme.* Jesus, not Peter, is our focus in this story. Surprised? What is the Way of Jesus in this story? For me to understand, it was important to look back and re-read what had happened prior. In Luke's telling of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples we read Jesus telling Peter that Satan had demanded permission to sift him like wheat. Why is this The Way of Jesus? Doesn't Jesus protect his disciples, lead us not into temptation?

Peter argues with Jesus saying "I will lay down my life for you" when Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times! and Peter says he would rather die than deny Jesus.

Today's story takes place after the Last Supper, and after Jesus' arrest. Peter and another disciple had quietly followed Jesus and were there at the temple near him. When the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples, and his teaching, Jesus replied saying he had spoken openly, teaching at the temple and where there were crowds of Jews, nothing was in secret. But what He says

next is significant to me. Knowing who had followed him there, Jesus says “Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said.” Is The Way of Jesus setting the stage for Peter to be questioned, “Are you not one of this man's disciples?” Peter was asked...

It is amazing to me that we may think we are ready for the big trials. Like Peter, we will swing with our swords and give our lives to defend Jesus, yet when questioned by a servant girl, stumble and deny Him. But why? Why is this The Way of Jesus, allowing this to happen?

For some, The Way of Jesus can appear easy or simple; Jesus loves you so love Jesus, and love others. Feeling confident in that truth may be allowing subtle enemy attacks. “*So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall*” 1 Corinthians 10:12 . Peter's fall, or denial that he knew Jesus', is so significant it might make our subtle thinking “I got this - Love Jesus, love others” into a snare, or a trap. The Way of Jesus is anything but simple, he wants so much more for us. The Way of Jesus is higher than our way. The Way of Jesus is to use our failures to strengthen us for what is ahead, what only He can see.

However difficult it is to not jump or look ahead, here our story ends. In this Holy Week, let's sit with Peter and let Jesus have His Way.

- Karen Kirkman

Step Four: Close in prayer, thanking God for what has been revealed to you today and asking the Lord to help you carry it into this day and the days ahead. Here is a prayer written by Karen that you may use to close your devotional time today:

Holy God, forgive me for those times my loyalty wavered and withered under the onslaught of unexpected trials. So often, I get an idea of how I think things should go. I expect you to follow my path, rather than for me to be faithful as I follow your path. Forgive my arrogance, my impatience, and my Peter-like confusion and failure. Thank you, God, for allowing us to stumble when our weakness has caused failure. In Your Way Jesus, strengthen us for the journey ahead. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Step Five: Join us as we continue reading God's Word this week, paying special attention to John's account of Jesus death (Thursday and Friday), Matthew's account of Jesus' resurrection (Saturday-Monday), and Mark's account of Jesus resurrection (Tuesday). We will hear from both Pastor Ashley (sermon on Sunday) and Louise Sargent (devotional next Wednesday) concerning John's account of Jesus' resurrection. Pay attention to all three accounts (Matthew, Mark, and John... you can add on Luke's account (Luke 24:1-12), if you're curious) as they build on one another and speak to one another about the glory and good news of the resurrection of Jesus! Here are the daily Scripture texts for further reading:

- **Thursday, Apr 1** – John 19:28-40
- **Friday, Apr 2** – John 19:14-30
- **Saturday, Apr 3** – Matthew 27:57-66
- **Sunday, Apr 4** – Matthew 28:1-10
- **Monday, Apr 5** – Matthew 28:11-15
- **Tuesday, Apr 6** – Mark 16:1-8