

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 Four

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

Step Two: Our Scripture reading today is **John 8:12-20**. 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 high school senior, Cara Conforti:

Jesus: Lighting the Way for the World



"Transfiguration" by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman
A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

When Jesus declares truth in our lives, how do we respond? Do we respond with wholehearted faith, numbness, curiosity, or skepticism? At points, I'm sure all of us have reacted with each of these feelings when we encounter God's proclamations of truth. Today, I invite us to look closer into the Pharisees' responses to Jesus' declaration of His Godly power, and to consider what this story can show us about our own responses to Him.

This passage begins with Jesus declaring himself to be the light of the world. After hearing that phrase often, it's easy to skim past it and forget how astounding that claim was at the time. So, what did Jesus mean by "the light of the world"? In the Bible, light is used often in reference to God. In Isaiah 9, verse 2, a prophecy about the coming Messiah declares, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned". In the first part of Psalm 27:1, David proclaims, "The Lord is my light and my salvation". And there are many other instances of the Messiah and God being referenced in the language of light. So, by naming Himself as the light of the world, Jesus claims a power and position far greater than any human could imagine. It was these types of declarations that constantly infuriated the Pharisees, and this situation is no exception.

In verse 13, the Pharisees respond to Jesus' assertion by telling Him that His testimony is invalid because He is the only witness for Himself. They ignore the numerous miracles He'd performed and the preparation and evangelism of John the Baptist, which acted as witnesses to His glory. Instead, they choose to focus on the fact that at that moment, Jesus was the only one there to affirm His story. In verse 19, they question Him about where His Father is. They

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seem to want to trap Him into speaking words they can use against Him, hoping He'll say something so "heretical" that they can finally put Him away. The Pharisees don't come to Jesus wanting to believe in Him, or even trying to be open to what he has to say. They come with their opinions already formed, their defenses already up, and their minds itching to find any reason to dispute what Jesus says.

It's easy to criticize the Pharisees in situations like these. Yet, many of us end up approaching Jesus' words in the Bible like the Pharisees approach Jesus here. When we sit down to read His truths, do we lay down our personal opinions and earnestly seek to let His words mold us, or do we read His words through the lens of our hardened points of view? Do we come ready to open the walls of our hearts and let His words penetrate our days and our actions, or do we come ready to defend ourselves, to say, "Jesus, I know I sinned there... but there was a really good reason...!"? Do we approach grateful for the evidence in our lives that He is all-caring and all-powerful, or do we approach armed with excuses and complaints?

Too often, I find myself approaching God's Word more similarly to the Pharisees' attitudes than I'd like to admit. I'm sure I'm not the only one in that boat; as humans, we constantly tell God, "I know better" by choosing our way over His way. So today, I challenge us to ponder:

1. In what ways do I approach Jesus and His words? Do my responses to His truths ever resemble the Pharisees' responses?
2. How can I open my heart up to Jesus more fully and come to Him ready to trust, instead of doubt?

- *Cara Marie Conforti*

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 Cara that you may use to close your devotional time today:

God, I thank you for Your son Jesus, and for Your words in the Bible. I pray that as I come to You, I will see how I can approach Your wisdom with a more open mind and heart. Let my heart accept who You are and show me how I can share Jesus' light to those around me. Amen.

Step Five: Join us as we continue reading God's Word this week. Here are daily suggestions for further reading:

- **Thursday, Mar 11** – Luke 9:28-36
- **Friday, Mar 12**– 2 Peter 1:12-21
- **Saturday, Mar 13** – Psalm 27
- **Sunday, Mar 14** – John 8:1-11
- **Monday, Mar 15** – Matthew 5:1-16
- **Tuesday, Mar 16** – 2 Corinthians 4:1-15