

*“Who Do You
Say That
I Am?”*

Monique Crain Spells
Bere Gil Soto
Deenabandhu Manchala
Kristen Peters
Tyler Thompson

Welcome

Resource Overview

It is a gift for us to experience another Lenten season. In all that has occurred since the last time we walked with Jesus this way; the revolutionary hope of his ministry remains with us. We approach the next forty days with deliberate reflection and saturated pauses as an act of our faith. God's church is diverse in its expressions of faith. God's church is diverse in its members. God's church is diverse in its theology, yet the human and divine life of Jesus meets us all with an expectation. We are to remember him. To worship Jesus is one thing, and to praise him is another. To preach about Jesus is one thing, and to recite his words is another. Worship, praise, preaching, and recitation all have value, but to remember Jesus is to take him into your heart and allow his ways to take up root in your ways.

Our 2022 Lenten Resource, "Who Do You Say That I Am," calls us to REMEMBER him deeply. We need our memory refreshed and our spirits inspired. For the ones who are with us every day, we tend to sum them up too quickly. When we oversimplify those we love, we miss opportunities to love them more deeply.

Jesus is called by many names. Many of us have been formed in the "popular" ones, but this devotional is an encouragement to examine who Jesus is to you, especially as he reveals himself in the gospels. You have been provided the following for your intimate time with Jesus:

- An Overview
- Ash Wednesday Litany
- Week 1-5 Meditations and Reflections
- 10 Daily Affirmations
- Telling Songs
- Finger Labyrinth Prayer
- Palm Sunday Litany

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
Matthew 16:13-15 NRSV

We hope you remember Jesus well and enjoy!

Rev. Monique Crain Spells
Director of Christian Education & Faith Formation

Ash Wednesday Liturgy

Baptized in Ashes

- Leader: Welcome to Ash Wednesday. We gather to begin this Lenten season in holy reflection.
- People: We come humbly, carrying thoughts and situations that weigh on our hearts.
- Leader: In the first chapter of Mark, John the Baptizer announced an opportunity for us.
- People: We are offered a baptism of repentance that our sins would be forgiven.
- Leader: To be baptized is an act of immersion to embody inward release of what separates us from God.
- People: We know where sin lives inside of us. This admission is righteous.
- Leader: It was in the wilderness where John had the people confess their sins.
- People: We are walking through the wilderness.
- Leader: John baptized with water, but preached Jesus would come and baptize in the Holy Spirit. Let us take inventory of our need for spiritual baptism.
- People: We confess now to God where sin is housed in our bodies, minds, hearts, and tendencies. (silent pause)
- Leader: We have acknowledged our brokenness and wear ashes to proclaim our need of the Holy Spirit.
- People: Together, in community, we release our burdens and anticipate the Spirit descending like a dove.
- Leader: We are like the son of God; sent, received, and loved by our Creator.
- ALL: Thank you, Holy Spirit. Amen.

What's in a Name?

Week One: Unboxing Jesus

In the time of Jesus and well before, a name meant plenty. It built a narrative about a person that one could not develop by simply looking at them. Names are sometimes a story, a hope, an answer, or prophecy. We call Jesus by many names. The biblical writers offer us ample descriptions for our Beloved. Depending on our congregational upbringing, we may only be in the practice of hearing or referring to the “popular” names of Jesus. Like in most families, we have formal names and nicknames. In the church, it can be easy to nickname Jesus and in doing so, there is a risk we box him in. There are endless life-giving attributes we can attach to Jesus. Those found in the bible and in our lived experiences are ripe for more circulation in our meditations and community conversations. It is fair to say Jesus is much more than any of us have understood him to be.

In Matthew 16:13-15, Jesus asked his friends two important questions. Both had significance, but one question was essential to their faith as individuals and as a community. The first question tells us Jesus knows how impressionable surrounding narratives are: “Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?” It is helpful to know how Jesus is perceived outside of familiar space. Such insight today informs our approaches to caring for others and how we introduce Christ as a viable spiritual foundation. While this knowledge aids us, it is not the final say. How others perceive(d) Jesus is not conclusive, meaning it establishes no widespread certainty. The second question is intimate and conclusive in how the disciples will govern their lives: “But who do you say that I am?” Significantly more relevant to their shared ministry, Jesus wanted them to process their faith—to arrive at their own conclusions about him. In these verses of scripture, Jesus’ paramount concern was their spiritual interior. Following his leadership model of inquiry, we offer you this crucial question for Lenten devotion and beyond. Who do you say that Jesus is? Unbox your response. Who is Jesus in your life? Unbox that too. We are students of his way. Calling ourselves Christian is a commitment learning, bearing witness, and living what we say about Jesus.



What names of Jesus do we embody in the world?

10

Daily Affirmations

I know a Human Spirit
Jesus walked among us and with God.
I can be like Jesus.

I know an Individual.
Jesus did not esteem himself by affiliation.
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Teacher.
Jesus married his study with practical living.
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Friend.
Jesus journeyed with a circle of companions
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Defender.
Jesus stood for people forced to the margins.
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Healer.
Jesus cared for the sick.
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Listener.
Jesus heard the hearts of people.
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Resister.
Jesus did not bow to status quo.
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Mystic.
Jesus prayed for himself and others.
I can be like Jesus.

I know a Listener.
Jesus heard the questions and cries.
I can be like Jesus.

Week One: Reflections

“When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.”

Mark 1:37

1. Considering your ashes and daily affirmations, how were you refreshed by Jesus this week?
 2. Where do you see similarities between yourself and Jesus?
 3. How would you like to be more like Jesus?
 4. When did you experience Jesus through others this week?
-

Jesus of Nazareth

Bere Gil Soto

My granny's table has always been more than a place to eat, it is a place where the soul and the heart are nurtured too. The table is the most sacred place at their home; back in the day, when a friend or family would visit them, they would not sit in the living room. My granny would always invite them to table. She would offer them café con pan (or a whole meal!), and then they would talk for hours. Most visitors used to be folks from the rancho where they grew up; and names such as María, Juan, Marta, or José were common during that time. They would always refer to them as "Juan de..." and the street they lived in, or the parents/spouse they had, so they could know who they were talking about.

Although Jesus' name has a strong and powerful meaning, "Yahweh is salvation," truth is that it was a common name too in ancient times. That is why I think there is such a beauty in knowing him as Jesus of Nazareth; it is beautiful and powerful to know that Jesus was a man of his people, and that his people knew him. We know that Jesus had friends, we know that Jesus belonged somewhere, we know he was a human being with a story.

Within our story, we carry the places where we are from and even though sometimes those places are not pleasant, they are a part of our story. Nazareth was not a great city. Actually, some people even doubted if anything good could come out of there (John 1:46); however, when Jesus embraced everything that made him who he was, the streets that formed him, the friendships he may have had, the poverty in which he grew up, he did not see his story just as a painful liability.

Now, I know we all come from places, and sometimes these are hurtful places. Perhaps physical and geographical places were not pleasant. Perhaps emotional, psychological and even spiritual places have hurt us and tried to diminish and belittle us. But just like Jesus, the places where we come from can be redeemed and transformed, but we must know them.

So, as we walk towards the cross and encounter our own humanity yearning for new life, we ought to take time to reflect on where we are from. We must take time to heal the wounds of the places we have been hurt. We must let God redeem our story.

So... where you from?

Rev. Bere Gil Soto serves as the solo pastor at Iglesia Hermandad Cristiana, a multicultural Latino and Disciples of Christ congregation in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also serves at the National Benevolent Association as Convener for Peer Learning and Wellness Groups. Bere has a Master's of Divinity and a Master's of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, both from the Christian Theological Seminary and an undergraduate degree in Psychology from Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí in México.



Week Two: Reflections

*“Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”
John 1:46*

1. Where are you from and what is said about that place?
 2. What lasting memories do you have about your beginnings?
 3. In what ways are you/were you known at home?
 4. Where is redemption needed and possible?
-

Jesus the Son

Deenabandhu Manchala

“Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred... Or we can walk through lightly, ...ready to imagine another world”, writes Arundhati Roy, a well-known Indian public intellectual.¹

Lent meditations amidst the pandemic must focus on long cherished beliefs that guide our lives and attitudes. One such is 'Jesus as the Son of God'. Acknowledged by all three gospels as the “Beloved Son of God” at baptism and transfiguration and confessed by the Church for generations, this title seems fundamental to the affirmations of Jesus as God’s self-revelation and as a part of the Trinity, besides the consequent sinlessness that makes his act of salvation from sins possible. But this Jesus comes to us as a male, as a ‘Son’ of an often referred to male, God the ‘Father’.

Such imagery in most religious traditions continues to sustain and legitimize structures and cultures of domination and discrimination. Caste and patriarchy are two such that dehumanize millions in my country India. Women continue to be exposed to different forms of violation and violence – from birth to death. So are the Dalits, the social outcasts, shunned and humiliated because they are considered as low born. Blatant abuse and marginalization of people from certain locations and identities, and bald-faced assertions of power and privilege continue to feature our world despite the pandemic making all of us vulnerable. Sadly, some religious institutions and their expressions too seem to endorse this immorality.

In such a world where identities bestow or deny privilege and opportunities, an intentional focus on actions rather than affirmations might help us reclaim our faith afresh beyond the contours of doctrine and tradition. “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.” (Matt.11:19), quips Jesus. Through his identification with those who are marginalized and excluded, Jesus indicts the forces that deny and destroy life. These (referred to as ‘her’) deeds of wisdom liberate and transform lives and situations.

Elsewhere, he defines his identity through his vocation: ‘the son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’ (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10: 45) Amidst the common and popular divine attributes – power and glory, Jesus the son of man offers a glimpse of God as one who serves, nurtures and cares for life - attributes often considered feminine.

In a world that privileges some on account of their power, wealth and identities, here is one – a symbol and presence of God at the margins turning the world upside down, birthing a new creation, and a new order that seeks to make the promise of salvation real to all of God’s creation. We cannot miss this counter-cultural and ongoing character of God’s salvation at this time of Lent.

Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala, a pastor and theologian from India, is the area executive for Southern Asia in Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples Church (Christian Church), Cleveland, Ohio, USA.



Week Three: Reflections

“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:45

1. How does your name offer you a sense of belonging?
2. How does your name offer you privilege?
3. How does your identity purpose you to care for others like Jesus did?
4. How do you understand Jesus to be counter-cultural?

Jesus the Beloved

Kristen Peters

Matthew 12:18 says, “Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.”

Divine Love

This scripture recalls Isaiah 42, a proclamation of hope to a post-exilic people who were upset with God. They had lost faith after the Babylonian exile. They felt defeated and abandoned by God. The people were weary and questioning the power and presence of divine love in their lives. I believe the writer of Matthew borrowed this scripture from Isaiah because the people he was writing to struggled with the same feelings and questions, and he wanted to give them hope.

Year two of a world-wide pandemic has made a lot of us weary. As we approach another Easter in pandemic times, it is difficult to revel in hope when the world in front of us feels more hopeless. We have not cured the deadly virus. We cannot agree on protocols and procedures to keep one another safe. The thought of not being able to sing or hug one another on Easter morning is depressing. Our ears are rubbed raw from masks. Online worship has become background noise. The complaints go on and on. Meanwhile, the grief and death are real. There are empty pews with shadows of the sick still cast upon them. Their seats still warm and their memory still very present.

We are a lot like the people Isaiah & Matthew were speaking to: hungry, angry, lonely, and tired. What does God's beloved have for those of us living in this reality? We are given a promise of divine love and accompaniment. Jesus will continue to proclaim justice and persist in the struggle with us. We have a God who loves us so much that we are promised a kind of love that dives into the deep with us. Emmanuel. So, while there is not a solution or a band-aid to heal this wound, we are reminded of a God who has loved us enough to endure struggles with us. AND, our savior is the beloved who will persist until justice is victorious!

May your weary hearts find hope as the beloved persists.

Rev. Kristin Wolf Peters (she/her/hers) is from Atlanta, GA, land of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Kristin is ordained in the Disciples of Christ, Christian Church and has served in congregational ministry, Global co-working in Chiang Mai, Thailand and as an interfaith hospital chaplain completing a year-long ACPE residency in Des Moines, IA. Kristin has organizing experience most recently working with the Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition's Interfaith Working Group in Fairbanks, AK. Kristin has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Music Theatre, Master in Divinity from Columbia Theological Seminary, and is beginning a new role as a Chaplain PRN at a level two trauma center.



Week Four: Reflections

“Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.” Matthew 12:18

1. What deep grief have you felt because the pandemic?
2. How has your hope been affected by our new realities?
3. Can you sense God accompanying you? How? When?
4. Name previous struggles you have endured and overcome with God's persisting love?

Jesus the Messiah

Tyler Thompson

*"Give the winds a mighty voice, Jesus saves, Jesus saves; let the nations now rejoice, Jesus saves, Jesus saves; shout salvation full and free, highest hills and deepest caves, this our song of victory, Jesus saves, Jesus saves."
-We Have Heard A Joyful Sound*

The Messianic Hope, that salvation would be shouted full and free, a song sung of victory, that all of creation, even the stones would sing out. That has been, and is, the hope. And the question of this deepest longing... "What is Messiah saving us from?"

The long-held messianic hope held with it the expectation as to how "the anointed one" might come to save the Jewish peoples. Ruled under Roman occupation, many Jews expected the Messiah to be a military authority who would drive out by force the unjust, oppressive Roman regime and system. To be saved, to shout salvation full and free. A Messiah, "the anointed one," a song of victory from the principalities and powers of the world. Messiah saves, restores, and redeems.

The hope of being saved. But the question has been, Messiah saves from what? What sort of salvation promised by Messiah would be reason to shout? What would call for the rejoicing of the nations?

While I have yet to discover a place in the Scriptures where Jesus calls himself Messiah, perhaps it is his quoting Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18-19 that has us proclaiming that the Messianic hope has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus. Jesus, the embodiment of this Hope, proclaims what hope looks like that causes saving's shouts.

Anointed, Jesus comes in humility, which is not to say he lacks power or is weak. He is liberator, not merely setting the captive free, giving sight, giving the poor good news, but ushers in a new age, a new realm, a new way of being. His way is personal and public. His proclamation of a way of shalom.

Jesus, anointed to save... Messiah... saves from death beyond the grave and before. His is a liberation not only from the pain that injustice and oppression causes, but liberates and saves by snuffing out the death-dealing ways of the world.

Messiah. He feeds the hungry AND works through us to dismantle the systems that keep stomachs aching. Messiah. He sets the captive free AND works through us to confront and dismantle systems in which stockholders' pocketbooks are made fat through the private prison industrial complex. Messiah. He restores sight AND exposes the lies that keep us blind to Truth. Jesus. Messiah. Anointed. Ushering in a way of life, guided by values that God might recognize as God's own, not only so that weeping and crying and pain and death may cease, but so that all injustice that induces weeping and crying and pain and death may cease.



For the past five years, Rev. Tyler Andrew Thompson has the privilege of serving as Senior Minister at Zionsville Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Zionsville, IN. Before serving at ZCC, Rev. Thompson served Lindenwood Christian Church (Memphis) and First Christian Church/The Table (Knoxville, TN). Rev. Thompson holds a BGS Degree from Texas Christian University, and an M.Div. from Christian Theological Seminary.

Week Five: Reflections

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.” Luke 4:18-19

1. What is your expectation of salvation?
2. What about Jesus makes you rejoice?
3. How does hope appear in the life of Jesus?
4. Jesus restores sight. Where might you have blindness? How has Jesus affected your sight?

Telling Songs

A Playlist to Accompany

[There Is Something About That Name](#) (William McDowell)

[Come Down O Love Divine](#) (Fernando Ortega)

[Sweet, Sweet Spirit](#) (Gaither Music Group)

[The Presence](#) (Youthful Praise)

[Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing](#) (Chris Rice)

[Forty Days and Forty Nights](#) (The Gesualdo Six)

[Little More Jesus](#) (Erica Campbell)

[What Is This?](#) (Walter Hawkins)

[Peace Be Still](#) (Hope Darst)

[Show Me Your Glory](#) (Karen Clark Sheard)

[All Who Are Thirsty](#) (Brenton Brown)

[Great Is Your Mercy](#) (Donnie McClurkin)

[My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord](#) (The Concordia Choir of Moorhead Minnesota)

[In the Garden](#) (Marvin Sapp)

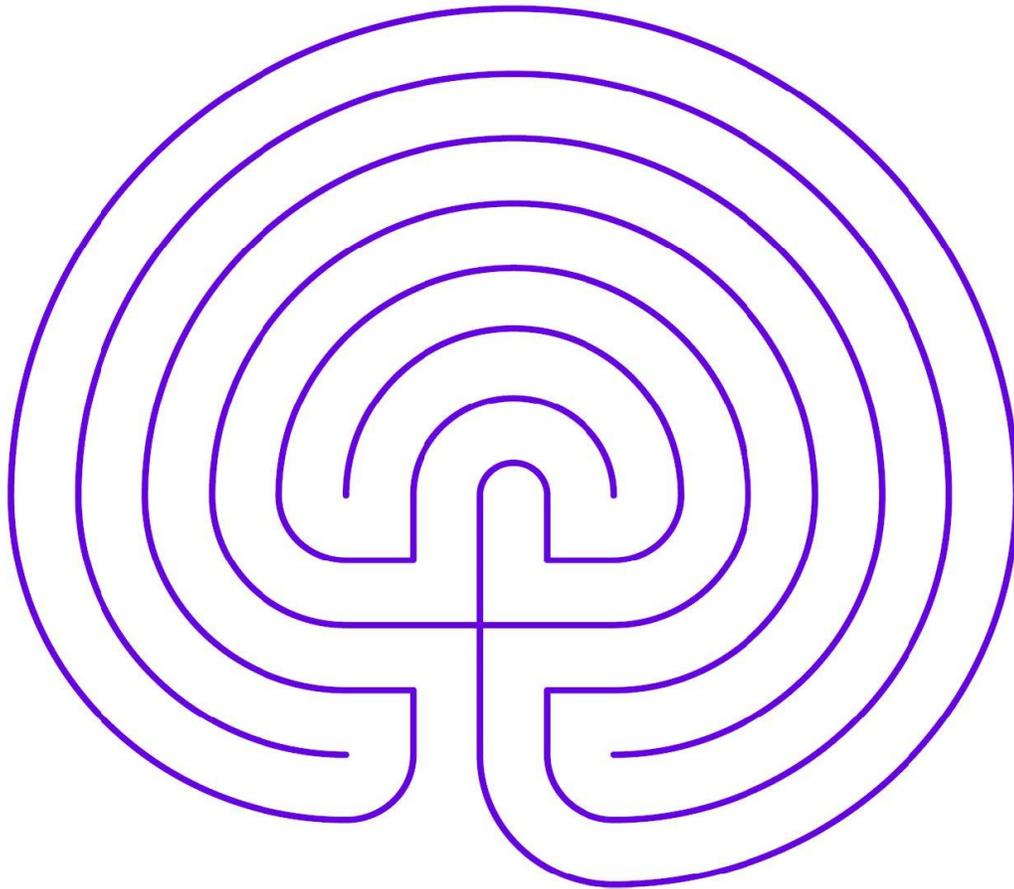
[Hosanna](#) (Kirk Franklin)



Labyrinth Prayer

The four Gospels are saturated with the instruction to “follow” Jesus. Let us do that in prayer using our fingers. Please ask for assistance if needed. As you move your finger around the labyrinth, recall your journey with Jesus during Lent and throughout your life. Our prayer is simply:

*I have followed you. I will follow you. Jesus, thank you for leading me.
(Repeat until you have reached the end of the path and back.)*



Palm Sunday Litany

Hosanna Now and Forever

Leader: We gather this Palm Sunday shouting, "Hosanna!"

People: We celebrate the one who comes to us riding a donkey.

Leader: They wondered who he was and we are still in discovery. Come, Jesus!

People: He is the prophet from an unexpected place. God, we thank you for surprises.

Leader: The religious folk became nervous about his influence on the people.

People: We are the people and we shout, "Hosanna!"

Leader: Hosanna in the highest, now and forever.

People: Jesus has come to set us free. He has come to show us a new way.

Leader: We join with a great cloud of witnesses giving honor and thanks for our Redeemer.

ALL: Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest, now and forever!

For more information regarding Christian Education & Faith Formation, please contact:

Rev. Monique Crain Spells
Director of Christian Education & Faith Formation
Disciples Home Missions and National Convocation
P.O. Box 1986
Indianapolis, IN 46206
Email: mcrainspells@dhm.disciples.org
Phone: (317) 713-2641
www.discipleshomemissions.org

