

Daily Devotional Thoughts for Lent – Freeing Jesus

Wednesday, February 22, 2023 – Ash Wednesday (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Rediscovering Jesus)

Now when Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Human One is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” He said, “And what about you? Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then Jesus replied, “Happy are you, Simon son of Jonah, because no human has shown this to you. Rather my Father who is in heaven has shown you. (Matthew 16:13-17 CEB)

As we begin this season of reflecting on the ways in which we relate to Jesus, it is appropriate to ask the question, “Who do you say that Jesus is?” What of your understanding of Jesus has come from what you have been taught or what you have heard from others? What of your understanding of Jesus comes out of your experience of him?

Thursday, February 23, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Rediscovering Jesus)

“If we think being with Jesus means getting the right answers from a creed or remembering points of doctrine from a sermon, we probably will not manage to truly know Jesus... ‘Who are you, Lord?’ is the question of a lifetime, to be asked and experienced over and over again. That query frees Jesus to show up in our lives over and over again...” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. XXV]

Have you experienced the limitations of knowing Jesus through a creed or from sermons or what others say about Jesus? Have you ever felt cautious or timid about just asking Jesus, “Who are you Lord?” What worries you about the answer you may get to your question?

Friday, February 24, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Rediscovering Jesus)

The title of the book we are studying during this season is *Freeing Jesus*. Diana tells the story of the time she heard a voice while she was praying in a chapel in the National Cathedral that she sensed was Jesus saying, “Get me out of here.” What thought come to you when you think of Jesus saying, “Get me out of here?” What does it mean to set Jesus free?

Saturday, February 25, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Rediscovering Jesus)

In her book, *Freeing Jesus*, Diana Butler Bass talks about her relationship to Jesus in his different roles: Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, and Presence. To which of these roles are you most drawn? To which are you not as familiar?

Sunday, February 26, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Rediscovering Jesus)

During this season of Lent, we are invited to participate in a “rediscovery of the Jesus who is liberated from constraint and whose company releases the possibility of peace, healing, and compassion in our lives and for the world.” [Diana Butler Bass *Freeing Jesus*, p. XXVII]

Where have you witnessed the possibility of peace, healing, and compassion being released into the world around you? How might you be an instrument of the possibility of this peace, healing, and compassion because of your experience of Jesus?

Daily Devotional Thoughts for Lent – Freeing Jesus

Monday, February 27, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Rediscovering Jesus)

“We live in a time of disruptions, deconstruction, and dislocations, of political chaos, climate crisis, and global pandemic. Yet we are still called to go on journeys to unexpected places, get lost, get found, and continue farther down the road,” as freeing Jesus means finding Jesus along the way. [Diana Butler Bass *Freeing Jesus*, p. XXVI-XXVII]

What journeys to unexpected places has your relationship with Jesus taken you over the years? Share your stories with someone else and listen to their stories.

Tuesday, February 28, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Rediscovering Jesus)

‘Understanding the Jesus of history has proved helpful (and even life-giving) for me; and I appreciate the theological traditions surrounding the Christ of faith. Yet, neither historical scholarship nor conventional doctrine quite captures who Jesus is for me... [but neither] fully tell the story of the Jesus I know: the Jesus of experience.’ [Diana Butler Bass *Freeing Jesus*, p. XIX-XX]

What about you? How has the Jesus of history been helpful along the way? What theological traditions surrounding the Christ of faith have been most meaningful? Yet, how do they differ from the Jesus you have experienced?

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 (Rev. Tammy Jackson Gill – Jesus as Friend)

“‘Friend’ seems to be a gentle way of understanding Jesus, yet it is often mocked. Atheists sometimes ridicule Christians as having an ‘invisible friend’. But the criticism is not limited to atheists. I have heard famous preachers and theologians explicitly attack the idea of Jesus as friend as juvenile and instead argue for a more ‘mature’ Jesus.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pp. 2-3]

How do you feel about viewing Jesus as your friend? Does it seem immature? What have you been told or taught about calling Jesus your friend?

Thursday, March 2, 2023 (Rev. Tammy Jackson Gill – Jesus as Friend)

“Jesus’s welcome of children points us toward the friendship for which we were created, even as we mourn what we do not know how to get back there. But Jesus is still waiting on the playground, wanting to be our friend.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 12]

What did you learn about Jesus as a child? How has your idea about Jesus changed as you have become an adult? In what ways could it be freeing to return to the playground with Jesus?

Friday, March 3, 2023 (Rev. Tammy Jackson Gill – Jesus as Friend)

“In the opening chapters of Genesis, God is lonely and wants a friend. Of course, it does not say that directly, for most theologies depict God as perfect and complete, with no need for anything beyond God’s own self. But when I read those pages, God, at the very least, seems bored by divine isolation. So God creates, almost as if at play in the cosmos . . . God made male and female to be friends, companions, and lovers and to bring forth children, just so no one will ever be lonely again.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pp. 8-9]

What do you think about this idea of God being lonely and wanting friendship? Or needing friendship? In what ways does this way of thinking about God make it easier or harder for you to think of Jesus as a friend?

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Saturday, March 4, 2023 (Rev. Tammy Jackson Gill – Jesus as Friend)

“Friendship is contingent on love—real love: compassion, empathy, reaching out, going beyond what we imagine is possible. That is the command: Love. And if we reach out in love, friendship is the result, even friendship with God. Friendship is mutual, a hand extended and another reaching back” This is how Diana Butler Bass explains Jesus’s statement “You are my friends if you do what I command you (John 15:14). [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pp. 11-12]

Are there some hands you find it harder to reach out to in love? What makes it hard for you in those cases? How do you feel when someone extends the hand of friendship to you? Can you imagine Jesus reaching a hand out to you? Would you take it?

Sunday, March 5, 2023 (Rev. Tammy Jackson Gill – Jesus as Friend)

Jesus called people in the Bible friends that the rest of the world at the time would consider outcasts and misfits: “to the ragtag fishermen and curious women, sitting around him listening to his tales, trusting for the first time that the God of Israel had not forgotten them, souls broken under the weight of Roman oppression, suffering under imperial slavery. They were not slaves, not even servants. They were friends of Jesus, friends of God.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 15]

In what ways is it hard for you to believe Jesus calls you a friend? Someone Jesus wants to talk with and spend time with? How does it feel to know Jesus enjoys being with you?

Monday, March 6, 2023 (Rev. Tammy Jackson Gill – Jesus as Friend)

“Quakers’ is a nickname for the Society of Friends that was a religious group founded in the mid 1600’s. Quakers believed that every human being was filled with the “inner light,” or the presence of God. The Friends met to encourage one another to listen to and experience the light. Believing that all are friends of God and one another, they were deemed radical, heretical and a threat to the order of society. Friends advocated for all sorts of social justice causes, including abolition and women’s rights. It all seemed pretty obvious to them: friends do not let friends be held in slavery. Friendship expanded naturally from the most profound inner experiences to the world of social relations and politics, as friendship with God meant a more just, loving, and egalitarian society.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pp. 20-21]

In what ways could this idea of friendship lead to greater justice and liberation in our world today? How can friendship with Jesus lead to a greater desire for friendship with the whole world?

Tuesday, March 7, 2023 (Rev. Tammy Jackson Gill – Jesus as Friend)

“Know that Jesus is your friend. Be a friend.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 24]

What adventures might lie ahead for you and Jesus, your Friend? What other friends might you invite to go along?

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Jesus as Teacher)

“In the gospels, the preponderance of action that occurs is Jesus’ teaching. He teaches at the Temple, on a hillside, by a lake, in a field, by a campfire, at a dinner table, while at a wedding and in the center of the city. He teaches individuals, his disciples, large crowds, small groups, his friends, and his foes.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 29]

In what ways do you think of or relate to Jesus as a teacher? How does thinking of Jesus as your teacher change or enhance your relationship with him?

Daily Devotional Thoughts for Lent – Freeing Jesus

Thursday, March 9, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Jesus as Teacher)

“I had been asked to address a group of rabbis on retreat, an invitation that both honored and humbled me. The days together were wonderful. After a particularly beautiful time of prayer and song, I blurted out to one of the rabbis, ‘I want to be Jewish!’ He looked at me with a glimmer of laughter in his eyes and inquired, ‘You follow Jesus, right?’ ‘Yes,’ I responded. ‘He was a rabbi, you know,’ he said. ‘Follow him. Listen to his teaching, and you’ll do just fine.’ From that day on, I understood that Jesus was indeed my rabbi. He had been for a long time. Follow his teachings—the rules and commands—listen to the stories, embrace the word, and live his wisdom. Rabbi Jesus shows the way.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 31]

Does thinking of Jesus as your rabbi change how you relate to Jesus? How do the words, *follow*, *listen*, *embrace*, and *live*, stir your imagination when you think of learning from Jesus?

Friday, March 10, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Jesus as Teacher)

“As a rabbi, Jesus was remarkable, challenging, and inventive. His teachings remain compelling, influencing people throughout the ages and well beyond Christianity; and those teachings stand on their own as beautiful without needing to diminish others. ‘I saw that the Sermon on the Mount was the whole of Christianity for those who wanted to live a Christian life,’ recalled Mahatma Gandhi. ‘It is that Sermon which has endeared Jesus to me.’ Perhaps, even as Gandhi himself bemoaned, if Christians really followed the one they claimed as Teacher, the world would be a more just and loving place.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p42]

What attracts you about Jesus? What about Jesus and his teachings do you wish people who didn’t know him would be able to see or understand? What prevents this from happening?

Saturday, March 11, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Jesus as Teacher)

“Jesus was a sage, a teacher of wisdom. Regularly addressed as ‘teacher’ during his lifetime by followers, opponents, and interested inquirers alike, he has been hailed by subsequent generations of Christians as more than a teacher, as indeed he was. Nevertheless, he was not less than a teacher...But what was he a teacher of? ...Jesus was not primarily a teacher of either correct beliefs or right morals. Rather, he was a teacher of a way or path, specifically a way of transformation.” [Marcus Borg, quoted by Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 60]

How would you answer the question, “What was Jesus a teacher of?”

Sunday, March 12, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Jesus as Teacher)

“‘Parable’ comes from two Greek terms, *para*, meaning ‘to come alongside,’ and *ballein*, meaning ‘to throw,’ and is itself a paradoxical word. A parable is intended to be a story that comes alongside our regular understanding and, frankly, upsets it. It uses ordinary things to draw us to extraordinary ones and crafts understanding using the seen to explain the unseen. In effect, the parables are Jesus coming alongside us and ripping off our cozy theological comforters...The whole point of a parable is to disturb and perplex us, shaking up what we believe to be true, all without providing an easy answer or simple moral to fall back upon.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 45]

Read the parable found in Mark 4:30-32. What are three different lessons you can find in that parable?

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Monday, March 13, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Jesus as Teacher)

“I am learning from Jesus to live my life as he would live my life if he were I. I am not necessarily learning to do everything he did, but I am learning to do everything I do in the manner that he did all that he did.” [Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 283]

Willard is speaking from the perspective of the student of Jesus. How does this connect with Diana Butler Bass’ idea of Jesus as my rabbi?

Tuesday, March 14, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Shawn Zambrows – Jesus as Teacher)

“Oddly enough, the Christian scriptures may contain some of the most ancient evidence of this Jesus development, and Jesus himself was the ‘earliest attested person in literature to bear the title “Rabbi.”’ To be a rabbi in the first century was to be a teacher who was crafting a new approach to Hebrew texts, traditions, and interpretations. And, sadly, both Christians and Jews have forgotten how completely innovative and challenging Jesus was as a rabbi. Jewish scholar Amy-Jill Levine calls both to account for missing the point of Jesus: “He must, in the Christian tradition, be more than just a really fine Jewish teacher. But he must be that Jewish teacher as well” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 31]

Wednesday, March 15, 2023 (Rev. Sherry McGlaughin – Jesus as Savior)

“And God provides a way through Jesus to heal what is broken and make it whole, liberating human beings from wounded lives.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 85]

Where do you feel a connection to “woundedness?” Sit with that thought/feeling for a few minutes and invite Jesus to sit with you.

Thursday, March 16, 2023 (Rev. Sherry McGlaughin – Jesus as Savior)

“The word ‘salvation’ comes from the Latin *salvus*, which originally referred to being made whole, uninjured, safe or in good health. *Salvus* was not about being taken out of this life; it was about this life being healed.” Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 76

What about our world needs to be healed? How do you feel a connection with what you identified?

Friday, March 17, 2023 (Rev. Sherry McGlaughin – Jesus as Savior)

“Some people do not feel much guilt...guilt is not the central issue in their lives. Yet they may have strong feeling of bondage, or strong feeling of alienation and estrangement.” “For some, the need is liberation; for others, the need is homecoming; and for still others, the need is acceptance.” [Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, pgs. 131-133]

For some people, the assumption is that Jesus saves us from the guilt of our sin. But Borg suggests that “Jesus as Savior” speaks to people in many different ways. What central need in your life can connect with the invitation to experience Jesus as Savior?

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Saturday, March 18, 2023 (Rev. Sherry McGlaughin – Jesus as Savior)

“All sorts of people in the gospels got saved *before* Jesus died on the cross. When Jesus healed, they experienced *salvus*, God’s salvation....Children, slaves, soldiers, peasants, fishermen, farmers, prisoners, the sick, the blind, the lame – when they encountered Jesus, they found salvation, the wholeness, the healing, the oneness with God that had only been the stuff of longing.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pgs. 96-97]

Some traditions emphasize the understanding that salvation comes through the cross. Diana invites us to consider that the whole of Jesus’ life was an offer of salvation. Where do you experience salvation in the life of Jesus?

Sunday, March 19, 2023 (Rev. Sherry McGlaughin – Jesus as Savior)

The claim of the angels (Luke 2:11) that Jesus is “Savior” directly challenges a basic claim of Roman imperial theology – that Caesar Augustus was “the savior who had brought peace on earth by bringing the great civil war to an end.” By naming Jesus as Savior, the biblical claim is that “Jesus, not Augustus and his successors, is the Son of God, Savior, and Lord who brings peace on earth.” [Marcus Borg, *Jesus: The Life, teachings and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*, pgs. 67-68.]

How can we think of Jesus as Savior as a counter-cultural understanding for our life and communities today?

Monday, March 20, 2023 (Rev. Sherry McGlaughin – Jesus as Savior)

“Salvation is not really about heaven; it is not an escape. It is about living beyond fear, knowing that death comes for each of us, often in mundane, quiet ways.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 112]

The invitation to experience Jesus as Savior is an invitation to experience life in all its fullness, to be set free from fear and to become fully the persons God is calling us to be. Where do you sense God may be calling you to embrace life more joyfully?

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 (Rev. Sherry McGlaughin – Jesus as Savior)

“Do not be afraid...: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)

The invitation to the shepherds and the invitation to our communities is to live beyond fear. Sit with this invitation in a time of quiet reflection and invite God to enter into a place of fear or confusion in your life with the words: Do not be afraid.

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Kathy Pickett – Jesus as Lord)

“Why do you call me “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them.” (Luke 6: 46-47)

Is Jesus your Lord? Is Jesus Lord of all or, confined to a certain image and resume’ of sorts? In chapter 4 of Diane Butler Bass’ book, she shares her journey of letting Jesus out of the ‘God box’ where she had him placed. Many of us grow up with Jesus in a box. Meaning, the place where our church life, others, and our journeys of faith teach us to keep him. On page 118 of *Freeing Jesus*, Bass includes, “Your God is Too Small, by J.B. Phillips, accused Christians of having “put God in a box,” of constructing a God in our own image and according to our own preferences.”

Do you have Jesus in a box? In what ways is your God too small and limited? How and when have you kept Jesus in a box? How might you and Jesus live more freely if you let him out?

Daily Devotional Thoughts for Lent – Freeing Jesus

Thursday, March 23, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Kathy Pickett – Jesus as Lord)

“In the avalanche of words, someone in a class or at chapel remarked, “Jesus can’t just be your Savior; he must also be your Lord.” I was riveted by the idea-Lord, Master of all, a God who cared about justice and peace and things that happened here on earth. Admittedly, the Jesus I had encountered as a teenager could manage to save people from sin and death, but maybe there was more. Maybe Jesus could save the world.” .” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 119]

Take some time to sit with this notion that Jesus is more than our personal Savior and ticket to church membership. Where and how have you seen the evidence that God/Jesus does indeed care about justice and peace? Is it possible that Jesus meant it when he prayed, ‘on earth as it is in heaven.’

Friday, March 24, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Kathy Pickett – Jesus as Lord)

“At its simplest level, the Greek term *kyrios*, meaning “lord” or “master,” quite literally meant the one who owns you. Slaves called their masters “lord”; students often referred to revered teachers as “master” and workers might call their employers “lord.” In a world where millions were held in slavery and millions of others lived in poverty and powerlessness at the bottom of a rigid social hierarchy, claiming Jesus as “lord” announced one’s liberation from oppression.” p. 120 “Jesus is Lord” meant far more than “Jesus is my personal master.” It meant, “If Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not.” .” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 121]

Who or what owns you? What role does Jesus as Lord play in your life? Does Jesus as Lord of your life liberate you socially, politically, relationally, theologically? Spend some time considering how Jesus frees you from the ‘ties that bind’ and calls each of us to do the same.

Saturday, March 25, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Kathy Pickett – Jesus as Lord)

Today, spend some time in prayer and song. On page 130 of *Freeing Jesus*, Bass includes the first verse of *Spirit of the Living God*,

Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me.

Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me.

Melt me, mold me,

Fill me, use me.

Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me.

To be freed and to set Jesus free from confining boxes, we must be open and willing to be reshaped and transformed. As you sing the words, or chant them, allow the Spirit of God to ‘melt you and mold you.’ As you gain greater clarity, ask God to fill you and use you in fresh new ways.

Sunday, March 26, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Kathy Pickett – Jesus as Lord)

“The priorities of Jesus’ kingdom would be exactly opposite of those in the world we knew-there holy generosity and true peace would replace capitalism and militarism. God’s Word teaches a very hard, disturbing truth, wrote Ron Sider, and evangelical theologian who also spoke in our chapel. Those who neglect the poor and the oppressed are really not God’s people at all=no matter how frequently they practice their religious rituals or how orthodox are their creeds and confessions.” .” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 137]

Bass expresses her revelation in her own wondering questions, “What we did mattered more than right belief? Right treatment of the poor mattered more than doctrine?”

How does her awakening to a different truth and way of the Lord speak to you? Does this reality unravel or enhance any of your beliefs? Are there changes you may need to make in response to Jesus’ kingdom priorities?

Daily Devotional Thoughts for Lent – Freeing Jesus

Monday, March 27, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Kathy Pickett – Jesus as Lord)

“Pursuing Jesus as Lord took me beyond the theological box of the Bible Church. Jesus was much more than I had imagined, and his concerns reached from the most intimate places of my own heart, to Mexican villages and American politics, to a vision of divinity that animated the entire cosmos with its glory. Although I still called myself an evangelical, I was increasingly disenchanted with evangelical churches whose worship seemed stuck on Jesus the Savior as the sum total of Christian theology.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 152] Is this quote disruptive to your beliefs and expectations of Jesus as Lord? If yes, how so? In what ways might Jesus as Savior limit Jesus as Lord? How will you respond to this freeing of Jesus? How should the church respond?

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 (Rev. Dr. Kathy Pickett – Jesus as Lord)

“Why do you call me “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them.” (Luke 6: 46-47)

Do you call Jesus Lord? How did Jesus demonstrate what it means to call him “Lord, Lord” and then act on it? What does this mean for your journey with Jesus and the ongoing building of God’s kin-dom on earth?

Wednesday, March 29, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as the Way)

“Perhaps the spiritual life was not about finding the right box or a bigger cage, but wandering into pastures, following the light, crossing the bridge. Not hemmed in by walls, by walking into the open.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 165]

What metaphor would you use to describe the history of your spiritual life? Have you ever found yourself boxed in or caged? How did you find your way out?

Thursday, March 30, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as the Way)

“As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea- for the were fisherman. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed Jesus.” (Matthew 4:18-20, NRSV)

The immediacy of Simon Peter’s and Andrews action is challenging to say the least! When have you experienced this immediacy (or not) in your spiritual journey in responded to Jesus’ invitation to follow?

Friday, March 31, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as the Way)

“Jesus uses these terms – the way, the truth, the life – to explain how he embodies a way of being in this world so close to the heart of God that God can be known in and through Jesus.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 165]

Reflect on experiences when you embodied a way of being in this world so close to the heart of God that God could be known in and through you. Share your experience with someone else on this Lenten journey with you.

Saturday, April 1, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as the Way)

“Conventional Christianity (of many denominations) prefers to see Jesus as a directive or destination rather than this path [a mapless journey where Jesus emerges as the road itself and the Light that guides]; for them the ‘way’ is a noun, not a verb.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 187-188]

Are you more comfortable with Christianity as a map or mapless journey? Is Jesus as the way a noun or a verb for you?

Daily Devotional Thoughts for Lent – Freeing Jesus

Sunday, April 2, 2023 – Palm Sunday (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as the Way)

“The Jesus way is full of switchbacks, spirals, and unexpected turns; mystery, paradox, unknowing, unsaying... No wonder Jesus says, ‘Follow me’ and ‘I am the way.’ ...Step away from certainty and find yourself on a labyrinth of love. And Jesus is there, both the way and the guide.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, p. 214-215]

Are you able to step away from certainty, trusting that Jesus will be there as both the way and the guide? If not, how might you begin this journey that is full of unexpected turns?

Monday, April 3, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as the Way)

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” [Frederick Buechner; *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*, p. 118-119]

Where have you felt most alive in your spiritual life as you walked the way of Christ in the world?

Tuesday, April 4, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as the Way)

"It is not the parts of the Bible I don't understand that scare me, but the parts I do understand." [Mark Twain] And a second and final quote for *Jesus as The Way*, ““The spiritual adventure described in the four Gospels does not happen in the sanctuary; it happens on the road, in the company of beggars, prostitutes, and lepers.” [Jack Jezreel]

What scares you about Jesus embodying a way of being for us to be most fully human as God intends us to be in the world where the way is on the road not in our sanctuaries, buildings, or faith community?

Wednesday, April 5, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as Presence)

“‘You’ve talked a lot about church trends and sociology,’ the pastor said in an accusing tone, ‘but I’ve not heard you say one word about Jesus What about Jesus? Where is Jesus.’ ‘as far as I know, Jesus is here,’ I responded. ‘Why do you think he is absent?’ ‘Because you haven’t said his name. Not once.’” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 217, 218]

Does Jesus’ name have to be invoked for Jesus to present? What do you think? How is Jesus present with you even as you read this devotional this today?

Thursday, April 6, 2023 – Maundy Thursday (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as Presence)

“Early Christians had a hard time figuring out who Jesus was... Did God exist as two, as Father and Son? What of the Spirit? These were difficult questions for the early church, not easily answered, and they prompted nearly five hundred years of theological speculation before being distilled.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 220]

As you gather at table this evening to celebrate the Lord’s Table, who is Jesus for you? How would you distill your understanding of who Jesus is? Is it precise or fluid, given your lived experienced of Jesus?

Daily Devotional Thoughts for Lent – Freeing Jesus

Friday, April 7, 2023 – Good Friday (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as Presence)

“Living with Jesus gets messy... Whatever theological definitions Christians use for Jesus, life typically uproots them. In recent decades, Jesus has often surprised me by showing up where I did not expect him, by redirecting my attention to scripture and theologies I had ignored, and by introducing questions I would rather have avoided.”

Life was certainly messy as Jesus labored to carry his own cross to Golgotha. When has living with Jesus got messy for you, redirecting your attention to something that you would have rather avoided... like the cross so center stage today? [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 221]

Saturday, April 8, 2023 – Holy Saturday (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as Presence)

“Jesus’ body reminds us that all bodies have been caught up in the story of redemption. ‘The shape of God’s body,’ writes theologian Sallie McFague, ‘includes all, especially the needy and the outcast.’ She continues: ‘The distinctive characteristic of Christian embodiment is its focus on the oppressed, vulnerable, suffering bodies, those who are in pain due to the indifference or greed of the more powerful... Jesus of Nazareth has a preferential option for the poor, the poor in body, those whose bodies and bodily needs are not included in the conventional hierarchy of value.’” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 237]

During the silence of this Saturday, reflect on times when your body was not included in the conventional hierarchy of value. How does Jesus’ broken body make it possible for your inclusion in the body of Christ?

Sunday, April 9, 2023 – Easter or Resurrection Sunday (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Jesus as Presence)

“Jesus, the birthed one, is also the ever-birthing presence, calling new life from the womb of God into the world. Not once, but many times.” [Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 227]

We have each been called from the womb of God into the world. How is God calling forth new life in you today? Where are you being called into the world anew?

Monday, April 10, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – The Journey Begins...)

“The Christian faith is different from what the world teaches. The Christian faith is not “seeing is believing,” but rather, ‘believing in seeing.’ We must open our eyes and hearts and see Jesus’ presence in our lives. We need to see Jesus in the places that we dare not look and dare not think about.” [Theologian Grace Ji-Sun Kim quoted in Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 245]

Where have you dared not to see Jesus in your everyday ordinary life? How might being aware of Jesus’ presence in these places transform you?

Tuesday, April 11, 2023 (Rev. Cheryl Raine – Free Jesus)

“Theology is not simply a set of truths to believe; it is a path to walk, or a living vision to pursue.” [Steven D. Boyer and Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable*, p. 43, quoted in Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, pg. 254]

What is the path that you will walk or the living vision you will pursue your experience of Freeing Jesus? May you find the presence of the mystery of God wherever you are found.