

## March 18

*'Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.'*

In the Broadway musical *Hamilton*, there's a moment of high tension when George Washington confronts Alexander Hamilton for being involved in a duel (literally his fatal flaw) to defend Washington's honor:

*Washington: Watch your tone  
I am not a maiden in need of defending,  
I am grown*

*Hamilton: Charles Lee, Thomas Conway  
These men take your name and they rake it  
Through the mud*

*Washington: My name's been through a lot, I can take it*

*Hamilton: Well, I don't have your name, I don't have  
your titles, I don't have your land*

What Hamilton doesn't understand is that Washington's lack of self-concern has nothing to do with his name, his titles, or his land. It's not that Washington's ego wasn't bruised by the badmouthing of his own generals. No human being likes to be maligned, especially when the criticism is unjust. But Washington had other priorities. The cause was more important to him than defending his own honor.

This attitude gets to the heart of what meekness is about. It's not a matter of passivity and spinelessness. On the contrary, the meek person must have incredible inner strength in order to resist the impulse to defend and avenge a wounded sense of honor. Humility is our armor: How can criticisms wound us when we know so well the magnitude of our own sin? Our focus is on Christ. Is there any greater honor than his blessing? Is there any greater cause than his grace?

-Jonathan Hauze

## March 23

*'Blessed are those  
who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.'*

I've been thinking about the wilderness a lot this year. The image of Jesus spending forty days in the desert with nothing to eat has really stuck with me. The thought of Jesus being utterly famished makes me wonder about my own experiences with hunger and thirst. Physically I know nothing about these things, but spiritually I have been in the wilderness more than a few times. When Jesus went there, he longed for God, and he was filled. What about me?

My longing is usually like this: "I wish that this situation would change." "I wish I could snap out of this mood." "I wish it would stop raining." "I wish I hadn't said that, done that, heard that . . ."

Jesus longs for no thing; he longs for God. Just like David in the wilderness, singing in Psalm 63:

*O God, you are my God, I seek you,  
my soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

This longing enables one who is famished to declare, "My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast." Much better than the wilderness wish, this trusting search for God leads the fainting, famished soul into a place of joy and praise. Try this the next time you are in a wilderness of sorrow or regret. Instead of wishing it were otherwise, turn your thoughts to God's goodness and see what happens. You just might witness a miracle.

-Jonathan Hauze

## March 24

*'Blessed are those  
who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.'*

One of my favorite books in all the world is a little volume of meditations by Thomas Merton called *Thoughts in Solitude*. And my favorite chapter consists of just one paragraph, a prayer that I have returned to over and again in times of confusion and spiritual stumbling:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

With Google Maps at our fingertips, we have grown accustomed to precision of direction. We would like the GPS coordinates for a blessed life, thank you very much. But that's not how it works. Even the saints may spend their whole lives wondering, “Am I going the right way?” Look at Mother Teresa. We always assumed that she knew where she was going, but we know from her journals that within her heart she experienced constant spiritual turmoil. Was she lost? It may have seemed that way to her, but we know from her life's work that she was not. She made love her desire, and through this humble desire the world caught a glimpse of heaven. By God's grace, the saints are not the only ones with this gift.

-Jonathan Hauze

# Blessed

Daily Devotions for Lent  
2019



**Lent 3**  
*March 18-24*

*St. Paul's United Church of Christ  
Exton, Pennsylvania  
www.saintpaulsucc.net*

**March 22**

*'Blessed are those  
who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.'*

**Filled**

by Lauren Alexandro

Peacemakers who break when children are slaughtered by hate  
will fill themselves with forgiveness.

Blood on the floor and tears in our eyes  
hard the work and empty the reward.

Beloved, who only felt the back of a hand  
go turn God's over  
and learn every line of His palm.

Bakers who scorched the loaves they meant to share  
will set the table and prepare a fine feast.

Soft is the bread and sweet is the wine  
hard the work and heavenly the reward.

Lovers, who only felt the backs of hands  
will turn God's over  
and learn every line of His palm.

**March 19**

*'Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.'*

**Quiet as a Church Mouse**

by Lauren Alexandro

Church mouse  
small on the sanctuary steps  
scurry silently  
come to worship.

Gather crumbs  
share in our communion  
take and eat  
all things are ready.

All things are ready  
take and eat  
share in our communion  
gather crumbs.

Come to worship  
scurry silently  
small on the sanctuary steps  
church mouse.

## March 20

*'Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.'*

The meek must shed all pretensions. This is an embarrassing and scary thought, considering the extent to which we are accustomed to clothing ourselves in our pretensions. The more vulnerable we feel, the more layers we wear – “see how strong and capable and confident I am!” – lest the world see the fragile, fallible, frightened self within.

We know that it's an illusion, this self that we project to the world. But we prefer the illusion to the truth, because we don't want to open ourselves up to judgment and ridicule. We'll go to great lengths just to keep a shred of dignity. Even if it means hurting someone else.

How does it happen, then, the journey from pretension to meekness? It helps to realize that the call to follow Jesus is not about revealing our naked self to the world. (I think there are laws against that . . . spiritual indecency?) That would come with its own problems, because then all the world sees is how corrupted we are, which is not going to help anybody who is hungry for the grace of God. No, what we must realize is that when we shed our pretensions, we take up a new garment, a mantle of righteousness that is not our own: “as God's own people, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” We clothe ourselves with Christ. Our lives are now in him. This frail ‘self’ that is always so busy defending and avenging itself no longer matters. It has died with Christ so that a new self—the true self—may arise in him. When the true self shines through, Christ shines through. Let there be light!

-Jonathan Hauze

## March 21

*'Blessed are those  
who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.'*

Apart from *The Righteous Brothers*, whose sweet soul music continues to put a smile on people's faces, the word ‘righteous’ doesn't tend to conjure up many positive feelings these days. When we do use the word in everyday conversation, it's usually to declare that somebody else is acting like a prig. For example, “That insufferable, self-righteous @\$%!”

In the Bible, the word is important. And it may not mean what people think it means. In both Hebrew and Greek, it can also be translated as ‘justice.’ It is intimately connected with God's care for the poor and oppressed. Unlike the justice of the courtroom, for which there is a different word, divine righteousness is shaped by God's mercy and lovingkindness that is especially directed toward the lowly ones in the world. If you think that biblical righteousness has to do with ‘churchy’ things, consider what the prophet Jeremiah says:

*Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,  
and his upper rooms by injustice;  
who makes his neighbors work for nothing,  
and does not give them their wages;*

When we make the connection between poverty and righteousness, we may see the poetry in Jesus' words. People may think that the only way to be ‘filled’ in this cruel world is to take advantage of others so that you can be sure to add to your bottom line. But from Jesus we learn the true way to fulfillment: to hunger and thirst not for our own gain, but for the well-being of those who tend to get the raw end of the deal.

-Jonathan Hauze