

Lent 2017



This year, we are combining two Lenten studies: “5 Marks of Love” (from the Society of Saint John the Evangelist) and “Lent in a Bag” (which includes meditations on the Sunday Gospel readings). The two devotions can be used separately or in tandem, individually or with a group of people. Each week’s study will be “marked” with a token to carry in your pocket, place on a window sill or put in the center of the dinner table for discussion.

The Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE) provides free, daily video devotions along with reflection questions at www.5marksoflove.org. If you subscribe, you will receive Lenten videos and questions each day through email. Free, downloadable workbooks and resources are also available. While the videos are more appropriate for teenagers and adults, the children’s workbook suggests weekly activities for younger people. Details are on the website. An “Introduction to the 5 Marks of Love” will be held during the Formation Hour (10:15 AM) on March 5 in the Great Hall. The meditations continue through the Lenten season.

The weekly Gospel readings are included in this booklet. Choose a time each week to read the Sunday scripture passage and think about the questions. A limited supply of “Lent in a Bag” materials are available at the church. In the bag are symbols to remind you of the Bible passages you read. If you would like to create a Lenten Prayer bag (or box or basket) at home, you can include these tokens: a small bottle or bag of sand, a candle, blue glass stones, a bit of brown clay and a cross.

Ash Wednesday is March 1.

*During this first week of Lent, we reflect on the forty days Jesus spent in the desert wilderness, preparing himself to **tell, teach, tend, transform and treasure** (the 5 Marks of Love presented by the Society of Saint John the Evangelist).*

Ash Wednesday Services with Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes will be held at 7:30 AM, 12:15 PM and 6:30 PM. A Children’s Ash Wednesday Service (with imposition of ashes) and Introduction to Lent will be held on March 1 at both 12:15 and 6:30 PM. Children of any age who are uncomfortable with the solemnity of the “big church” service are welcome.



For the first Sunday in Lent (March 5), read Matthew 4:1-11 (represented by sand) or read “The Temptations in the Wilderness” on page 204 in The Children’s Illustrated Bible. A link to the NRSV version of the passage is here:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4%3A1-11&version=NRSV>

After his baptism, Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray and prepare for his ministry. The desert can be an unfamiliar and scary place. It is always changing.

- *Where is the desert in your life right now?*
- *What temptations do you find there?*
- *Why do you think Jesus prepared to teach with fasting and prayer?*
- *Why do we prepare for Easter this way?*
- *Are there things you need to give up this Lent to make space for God?*



For the second Sunday in Lent (March 12), read John 3:1-17. It is represented by a candle. This text is **not** in The Children’s Illustrated Bible. Before you read with children, you might want to explain that Nicodemus was a very smart and respected teacher. His students thought he knew everything! But Nicodemus knew he had more to learn. He went to Jesus to ask questions. The passage can be found here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1-17&version=NRSV>
This week’s Mark of Love is Tell.

The candle represents the light of Jesus and the “little light” in each of us.

- *Why do you think Nicodemus visited Jesus after dark?*
- *Do you have questions you are afraid to ask in front of other people?*
- *How do you **tell** others the Good News?*
- *Where do you let your light shine? How do you make a difference in the lives of others?*



For the third Sunday in Lent (March 19), read John 4:5-42. It is represented by drops of glass “water.” This story is not in The Children’s Illustrated Bible but you can remind children that Jesus told Nicodemus about God. Nicodemus was well-respected. The Samaritan woman was not. She was an outcast, shunned by others. She went to the well during the hottest part of the day, when no one else would be there. Yet Jesus talked to her and taught her about God. In the whole Bible, this is the longest conversation that Jesus has with another person. You can read it here:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+4%3A5-42&version=NRSV>

The Mark of Love is Teach.

The glass “drops” represent the living water Jesus offered the Samaritan Woman. Imagine the woman’s surprise when Jesus talked to her so long.

- *When has someone really listened and talked with you?*
- *Who was the first person to teach you about God’s love?*
- *Do you hesitate to teach others about the Good News of Jesus? Why?*
- *When have you reached out to someone other people shunned?*



For the Fourth Sunday in Lent (March 26) read John 9:1-41

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+9%3A1-41&version=NRSV> . It is represented by clay. You can tell children that rules were very important to the Pharisees – more important, even, than the people those rules were meant to guide.

The Mark of Love is Tend.

Let the brown clay remind you of mud. Imagine wiping the mud off your eyes and suddenly being able to see.

- *Where do you see human need in your community and the world?*
- *How do you tend to that human need?*
- *Is it ever necessary to break the rules in order to follow Jesus?*
- *The blind man’s life was forever changed after he met Jesus. How has Jesus changed your life? How will you change other people’s lives?*



For the Fifth Sunday in Lent (April 2), read John 11:1-45

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A1-45&version=NRSV> . You can also read this story in The Children's Illustrated Bible on page 236. The story is represented by the clay. The Mark of Love is *Transform*.

Last week, the clay was just mud, transformed by Jesus into a cure for the blind man. Mold the clay into a shape that represents the transformative power Jesus.

- *What do you want to do to change the world for the better?*
- *What choices have you made that might have contributed to the suffering of others?*
- *Where do you see the power of God transforming unjust structures in our society? How can you help?*



For the Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday, April 9), read Matthew 27:11-54

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3A11-54&version=NRSV> . This story can be found in The Children's Illustrated Bible on page 272. The story is represented by a cross. The Mark of Love is *Treasure*.

- *The people shouted, "Crucify him!" How will choices you make today affect the web of Creation we all belong to?*
- *Jesus gave his very life in order that we might be reconciled with God and each other. What treasure (or time or talent) can you offer to help build a reconciled world?*
- *It is often said that we Christians are "Easter People" - people who believe and live in the Joy of Rebirth. But there is no Easter without Good Friday. Where, this week, do you see degradation and greed?*
- *What fosters your sense that creation is sacred?*

On Easter Sunday (April 16), read John 20:1-18

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20%3A1-18&version=NRSV> . You can find this story on page 276 of The Children's Illustrated Bible .

- *Where do you see new life?*
- *How will you TELL people the Good News, TEACH people to love, TEND to human need, TRANSFORM society and TREASURE Creation?*

