

MONDAY
21 MARCH
2 Kings 5:1-15
Psalm 42:1-2;
43:1-4
Luke 4:24-30

TUESDAY
22 MARCH
Song of the Three
2. 11-20 or Daniel
2:20-23
Psalm 25:3-10
Matthew 18:21-end

WEDNESDAY
23 MARCH
Deuteronomy 4:1.
5-9
Psalm 147:13-end
Matthew 5:17-19

THURSDAY
24 MARCH
Jeremiah 7:23-28
Psalm 95:1-2. 6-end
Luke 11:14-23

FRIDAY
25 MARCH
Annunciation
of Our Lord to
the Blessed
Virgin Mary
Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 40:5-11
Hebrews 10:4-10
Luke 1:26-38

SATURDAY
26 MARCH
Hosea 5:15 – 6:6
Psalm 51:1-2. 17-end
Luke 18:9-14

REFLECTION

This week's Old Testament readings show us what a struggle it was for the people to realise quite what their God was. The temptation was always to think of God as a small, local deity. After all, the world they inhabited was full of gods. So when things were not going their way, the people were tempted to try out another god, and see if that one worked better.

Jeremiah and Hosea see their people forgetting their God, trying out other things, relying on other powers. But Deuteronomy reminds them that if they truly followed God, they would be the envy of all the nations, because the God of Israel is so close to them, so accessible, so willing to hear their prayers, as Naaman discovered.

Although we know that our God is the only God there is, we still sometimes act as though we believe that God can only operate in church, or perhaps in our personal lives, but not in the whole world. This Lent, let us rediscover the God of the universe, and give this God our steadfast love and trust, as Hosea begs us to.

PRAYER

Eternal God,
 Give us insight
 to discern your will for us,
 to give up what harms us,
 and to seek the perfection we are promised
 in Jesus Christ our Lord.



Naaman bathing in the Jordan. St Mary Abbot's Church, London. Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com

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CHRISTIAN CLASSICS – A LENTEN STUDY COURSE

MERE CHRISTIANITY BY C. S. LEWIS – PART III

Jane Williams continues her study of C. S. Lewis' Mere Christianity.

The Christian understanding of how the world came to be a distressing mixture of good and evil is that God is good and made the world for goodness, but that God also made within that world beings who were genuinely free. God took the risk that these free beings would use their freedom the wrong way, which indeed they did.

God did not then give up on the whole thing, but chose one particular people and spent centuries working with them, helping them to understand what God is like, and what God cares about. And then out of that people comes one man, Jesus, who sounds as though he really understands God, and claims to be able to forgive sins.

Jesus speaks as though he can forgive the sins of all he meets. We may feel able to forgive people who have hurt us personally, but Jesus is doing what only God can do – forgiving the sins that have marred the whole of creation, and so have offended against the creator.

But Lewis points out that the Gospels say that Jesus came primarily to suffer and to die, and that this in some way dealt with the whole mess that human sin had got us into. Jesus came and suffered and died a human death, wholly surrendering his human life to the punishment that human sin deserves. But because Jesus was also God, he was able to do it perfectly, with complete obedience, as no human could.

We now have the chance to join in God's resistance movement. We do it by sharing in the new life offered in Christ, which is spread through baptism, belief and Eucharist.

Questions for thought or discussion:

- Would you want to add anything else to Lewis' "baptism, belief and Eucharist" as the means of appropriating new life in Christ?
- Lewis says that God leaves us time to join in before God returns in force. How might we join in? the rose candle, a fifth white or gold candle – called a "Christ Candle" – is often lit in the centre on Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day to signify Christ's birth. The circular shape and evergreen foliage of the wreath, which often forms the base for the candles, represent eternity.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
 THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
 Caroline Hodgson
 and
 Heather Smith



Third week
 of Lent
 Monday
 21 March to
 Saturday
 26 March 2022

WEEK