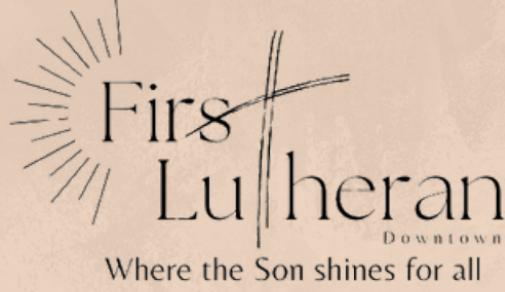




2026
Weekday Devotional Guide
*Journey through Lent with
First Lutheran Church*



Weekday Devotional Guide



This Lenten devotional invites you to journey through Lent with people of First Lutheran Church as they reflect on each week's Gospel reading. Five voices share insights Monday through Friday. We invite you to take sabbath on Saturday and worship on Sunday where you will hear Pastor Sami's sermon on the verse for next week.

Lent is a time of reflection, repentance, sacrifice and self-examination. But Lent is also a season of hope – hope in the work God is doing in the world, even in the most challenging times. It can be a season of spiritual renewal and preparation for the death of Jesus Christ. Lent means a lot of things to different people. What does it mean to you?

Thank you so much to everyone who contributed to the 2026 devotion booklet. I am amazed at the courage, faith and passion of First Lutheran Church. It is very unique to have 30 people willing to be so open and honest about their faith. I cannot thank you enough for sharing. This devotional booklet is truly a gift to everyone who reads it. Thank you so much.

Pastor Sami



Week 1

Matthew 4:1-11



Weekday Devotional Guide

Matthew 4:1-11

By Brenda Bass



Jesus' time in the desert is a familiar story. We often call it "The Temptation of Jesus." To be tempted often has a negative connotation as we think of it as someone, or something, trying to make us do something bad or negative. What if we read this passage with the idea of being tested rather than tempted? A time of testing is usually a time when we calculate, discern, and hear the voice of God.

God did not tempt Jesus in the desert. Satan was attempting to make Jesus use his power for his own glorification and rise to fame. God was able to use this time of testing to help Jesus see the path that was before him and what kind of leader he would be: a servant leader.

I take comfort in this passage knowing that Jesus, too, struggled with knowing where God was sending him. Jesus continued to draw from God's word and promises to know that his strength and calling came from God and not from the things of this world: possessions, power, charisma.

I pray as we begin this Lenten season we will spend time alone, with others, and with the word of God to make us strong, certain, and hopeful of the journey ahead

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, but always to your glory and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Weekday Devotional Guide

Matthew 4:1-11

By Roger Lenander



I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. – Romans 8:18

We are easily distracted by the wounds experienced in our lives. A joyful spirit can be dashed by a cruel word from a stranger. A confidence in the future is darkened by a serious medical diagnosis. A financial crisis can cause a person to doubt about their ability to survive.

Suffering can threaten to pull the believer away from faith in Christ. Faith gives us a further horizon of hope that strengthens the believer to live joy-full in Christ. We are reminded that there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:26). Our faith is strengthened as we experience that eternal joy in those moments of suffering. We are comforted with the prayers of others. We grow confident of God who is with us. Our eyes are raised to the eternal love and promise that Christ is already actively defeating the evil that is at work to turn our eyes away from him. In the suffering that we shall all experience in this lifetime believers can choose something other than futility. Believers can choose the hope that keeps our hearts and minds in Christ as the light that shines through the darkness.

"Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your God in heaven." Amen.

Weekday Devotional Guide

Matthew 4:1-11
By Marilyn Hunt



Immediately following his baptism by John in the Jordan River, Jesus went into the wilderness (desert) for what became a 40 day and night trial of deprivation and temptation by the devil. As I read about the three temptations presented to Jesus, a theme emerges that is reflected in each of His responses to the devil. Jesus responds with the truth found in Scripture (Deuteronomy). Whether tempting Jesus to feed himself and demonstrate His power by turning stones into bread, to prove God's power by throwing Himself from the temple, or to gain worldly glory (supposedly from the devil) by turning from God and worshiping the devil, Jesus chose God and truth over the devil's deception. His spiritual defiance is a lesson we all can try to learn and practice. As fully human, Jesus suffered temptation just as we do. It was part of His journey, and it is a part of ours. Jesus spoke with God's authority, and we can rely upon His timeless truth when we face our own wilderness experiences.

Lord Jesus, as we walk through our times of trial and temptation, help us stand firm and speak the truth. Fill us with your Word, steady our minds, and guide us in faithfulness.

Weekday Devotional Guide

Matthew 4:1-11

By Ken Korell



In this story of Jesus' temptations, I wonder if Jesus the Man is figuring out what it means to be Jesus the Son of God. He no doubt has learned it in our textbook kind of way. Mary and Joseph would have told him of his birth and of his mission as the long-awaited Messiah. He would have known his very name means to save and to deliver. We know he's been an expert in his knowledge of the old scriptures since childhood so he understands he's the anointed one. We know at the time of the temptations he's just come from his baptism and he's full of the power of God through the Holy Spirit. We know he's been attended to by angels, maybe for the first time. And we know he's just reluctantly performed his first miracle at his mother's request at the wedding in Cana. So maybe he's understanding his power as the Son of the Father and flexing his new muscles by fasting and resisting the devil's temptations. As he begins his "official" ministry, maybe he truly is understanding his awaiting trip to the cross and the open tomb. And it reminds us that we are saved by God's grace through Jesus' resurrection and that open tomb. Jesus used scriptures to resist the devil and it reminds us, too, that he said the two most important commandments in the old scriptures are to love God and to love others. Maybe that ministry of loving others for us is simple kindness and helping and caring for each other in his name. Let them see Jesus.

Lord Jesus, steadfast in temptation and faithful to the cross, root us in Your Word and grace. Help us love others so that in us, they may see You. Amen.

Weekday Devotional Guide

Matthew 4:1-11
By Misty Coyle



In the Gospel of Matthew 4:1–11, Jesus enters the wilderness, not as a distant hero, but as one who fully shares our human vulnerability. The temptations he faces are not so different from the ones that meet us daily. We are tempted to secure ourselves at any cost, to chase influence or recognition. Yet Jesus resists not through willpower alone, but by clinging to God's Word. We can say he lives from his baptismal identity: beloved, claimed, and sent. His refusal to bow to Satan is rooted in trust. When we face our own wilderness moments, we return to that same promise spoken over us in baptism. We resist temptation not by proving our strength, but by resting in Christ's.

In a time when immigration raids, fear of deportation, and concerns about civil rights weigh heavily on many communities, we are tempted to give ourselves over to fear, outrage, or hopelessness. We may be drawn to harden our hearts, to turn away from neighbors in need, or to believe that God is absent from the chaos. Yet Christ meets us in this wilderness too, grounding us again in our baptismal identity and calling us to be steady witnesses of mercy. We help others rest in Christ by embodying that mercy—listening without judgment, standing alongside the vulnerable, praying with and for one another, and reminding each other that no earthly power can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Weekday Devotional Guide

Matthew 4:1-11
By Misty Coyle



Gracious God,

In every wilderness we face, you are already there. When fear rises in our communities, when families feel threatened, and when justice feels fragile, steady our hearts in your promises. Guard us from the temptations of despair, bitterness, or indifference. Remind us that in our baptism you have named us beloved, and that no power on earth can take that away.

Give us courage to stand with those who are afraid. Make us instruments of your mercy and peace. Where there is anxiety, help us bring calm. Where there is division, help us bring understanding. Where there is injustice, help us bear witness to your steadfast love.

Teach us to rest in Christ, to trust your Word, and to follow Jesus through every wilderness into the hope of resurrection life.

In his holy name we pray. Amen.



Steps to Use a Finger Labyrinth

Find a Comfortable Space: Choose a quiet and comfortable place where you can sit without distractions. Ensure you have your finger labyrinth within easy reach.

Prepare Yourself: Take a few deep breaths to center yourself. You might want to think of a word, phrase, or intention to focus on during your labyrinth walk. This could be a prayer, mantra, or simply a calming thought.

Start at the Entrance: Place your finger at the entrance of the labyrinth. Some people prefer to use their non-dominant hand, as it can help access intuition more easily.

Trace the Path: Slowly and intentionally trace the path of the labyrinth with your finger. Move at your own pace, allowing yourself to feel the grooves and contours. This is a time to release tension and let go of busy thoughts.

Pause at the Center: When you reach the center of the labyrinth, pause for a moment. This is a time for reflection and receiving. You can meditate, pray, or simply be still and open to whatever arises.

Return Journey: After spending some time in the center, begin to trace your way back out of the labyrinth. This is often seen as a time of integration, where you can reflect on any insights or feelings that emerged during your journey inward.

Reflect on Your Experience: Once you have exited the labyrinth, take a moment to reflect on your experience. Consider how you feel and any thoughts or emotions that surfaced during the process.

This is an example of contemplative faith practices. The hope is, by using the finger labyrinth, you will:

- calm your nerves and reduce distractions, making it easier to focus on your thoughts and feelings.
- encourage mindfulness and presence, allowing you to engage with your inner self and promote relaxation.
- enhance spiritual practices, providing a space for prayer and reflection.

However, this may not work for everyone. It is just one tool for meditation, reflection, relaxation and connecting to God on a deeper level.