

WEEK #7 – LOVE’S TRIUMPHANT JOURNEY REACHES ITS CULMINATION HOLY WEEK

March 29th – Holy Monday

Centering Breath Prayer: “How priceless is...your unfailing love.”

Dearest Savior, as we traverse Holy Week, the burden of sin and death is heavy on my heart. Only your triumph over them can ease the burden and relieve my heart. Your suffering and its impact on the world is only exceeded by your ultimate triumph through your resurrection. As we move through this week, sensitize my spirit to your message and teach me through the actions you took on my behalf. Only your infinite, unfailing love could bring total triumph over all sin and death and it is in your loving name, I pray. Amen.

Scriptures: Psalm 36:5-11

Key Verse: Psalm 36:7a:

“How priceless is your unfailing love” (NIV).

We have come to Holy Week, the culmination of the Lenten season and the fulfillment of God’s plan to reestablish the loving relationship which God intended for us. God’s unfailing love reaches its zenith during this Holy Week. Because of the intense pain and suffering of Christ throughout this week, we often find it a difficult journey to make. We don’t like to be reminded that our Savior was betrayed, deserted, denied, unjustly accused, unlawfully tried, beaten, mocked, rejected, sentenced to a slow, tortuous death among thieves and nailed to a cruel cross. Yet, it is through this sacrifice that the depth of God’s love is made manifest. And, it is through this sacrifice that the triumph over the sin and death which seems the reigning force of this world, is accomplished. Jesus counted those who followed him, those he knew intimately, as friends. He knew their weaknesses, their doubts and fears, their ignorance, but he also knew their strengths, their faith and their capacity to love and to grow. He taught them wisdom and he taught them truth. They didn’t always understand his teachings, but he knew they would understand more and more as they continued to follow in his footsteps. Jesus calls us friends as well. He knows us just as intimately as he knew those who walked with him and talked with him day by day. We, too, have strengths and weaknesses, doubts, ignorance and fear along with faith. We, too, have the capacity to grow in wisdom, truth, faith and, most of all, love.

One of the teachings which they didn’t truly understand until after the resurrection was the willing sacrifice made for friends. Jesus had come to us as a human being, but was also completely God. Therefore, it was only by his consent, the willing gift of his life, that he could be killed. He was mocked while on the cross with words like, “*He saved others,’ they said, ‘but he can’t save himself!’*” (Mark 15:31b NIV). The truth was: he could very easily have saved himself, but willingly chose to die for us. What kind of price could anyone put on this kind of love? The Psalmist spoke truly about God’s love. It is both priceless and unfailing. Without it we have no joy in the gloom of our lives, no faith and love in the pain of injuries and suffering, no hope in sorrow, no light to illumine our darkness, no peace or everlasting life in the chaos swirling around us, nothing good

to expect when betrayal casts us down and no triumph over the sin and death that is our just deserts. Our Psalmist outlines both the sinners who should be cast down and the righteous who should be lifted up, but, most of all, recognizes God's unfailing love which covers them both. O Lord, *"how priceless is your unfailing love!"*

Additional Scriptures: Isaiah 42:1-9; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 12:1-11

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. How is God's unfailing love revealed to me through the events of this Holy Week?
2. What are my feelings as we move through this week with its painful and joyful events?

Suggestions for action:

Make some kind of sacrifice for a friend. Give up some of your time to do something with her; purchase him a special gift; instead of watching your favorite TV show or play your favorite computer game, write a special letter telling him why his friendship is so very important to you. It's only a small thing, but shows great love.

O Lord, sustain me through this final week of Lent with your unfailing love. When I would be overwhelmed by your sufferings, show me your compassion for others as you endured your sacrifice. When I would turn away in shame or doubt, hold me up with your forgiveness. When I would falter from the consequences of taking up my cross, fill me with the faith and strength to endure to the end. When I get lost in the darkness of despair, illumine me with the light of your compassionate presence. In your unfailing love, I pray. Amen.