

# Lenten Devotionals

Based on the Daily Gospels Reading from  
the Revised Common Lectionary



**Part 5: April 1-6, 2019**

**Knox Presbyterian Church, Listowel  
Rev. Don McCallum**

**Monday, April 1**

**The Bride and Groom**

*Reading: Revelation 19:1-8*

*“For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.”*

Weddings have changed dramatically over the past century or so. Prior to the 1950's most weddings in Ontario were simple affairs. The wedding couple and their witnesses would gather at the manse (parsonage) for a simple ceremony and then they would go back to the bride's home or some other location for what was essentially a kitchen party with family and friends. The televised royal wedding of Elizabeth and Philip is credited with popularizing more elaborate wedding arrangements.

The ultimate Royal Wedding is described in Revelation 19. The King of kings, comes in triumph, vanquishing suffering and all evil and establishing a new heaven and earth. His bride, the church, descends in glory. The Wedding Supper of the Lamb is the first order of business, where all God's people gather to rejoice in the presence of God with us. With that the new age begins.

You can tell the book of Revelation is written by a man. The only detail he provides about the wedding dress is that it is white linen. However the notation that linen represents the good deeds of the saints is of great importance.

Every positive thing that God's people do, individually and corporately, adds a stitch or a thread to the wedding garment. Every cup of cold water, every gift to the poor, every time of listening to the lonely or bereaved – in short every time we extend the love of God to another – adds to the glory of that gown. Perhaps we will have the chance to understand what we have contributed.

May the train be very, very long!

**Tuesday, April 2**

**Chosen to Attend!**

*Reading: Revelation 19:9-10*

*“Blessed are those who are invited to  
the wedding supper of the Lamb!”*

Sometimes there are three tiers of guests at a wedding. The first are those who are a part of a general invitation to witness just the ceremony. When I was a minister years ago in a rural charge it was the understanding that any neighbour was welcome to come. However they often sat in the balcony or at the back.

The second were those invited to the ceremony and the dance later in the evening at the community centre. These were mostly the local friends of the bride and groom who could be relied upon to liven things up (after the grandparents had headed home for bed!)

The best sort of invitation was to the whole celebration, including the wedding supper and toasts. Their number depended on financial resources but usually they were just the closer friends and family members.

With the Wedding Supper of the Lamb all of us are invited to attend and are welcome at the whole event. The one qualification is that each of us be a brother or sister of our Saviour and Lord.

In one of Jesus' parables, everyone is invited to the wedding feast of the master's son - the poor, the lowly – everyone. However one guest is tossed out because he is not wearing 'wedding clothes'. When we trust in Christ's death for forgive our sins, we are 'clothed' in his righteousness. We exchange our dirty rags for his spotless, clean record. We are restored as God's adopted children and we belong to the family of God. If we trust in Christ and commit to following him, we are chosen to attend!

**Wednesday, April 3**

**Expectations High or Low?**

*Reading: 2 Kings 4:1-7*

*“Go round and ask all your neighbours for empty jars.  
Don't ask for just a few.”*

Author Vince Vitale tells of a trip to Disney World that he took with his family when he was a child. His younger brother had never been on a plane before. When they landed at Orlando they went to the airport baggage carousel. He saw it going round and round and thought it was a ride. He exclaimed, “Dad! I love Disney World!”

Sometimes our expectations of God's blessings are too low. We pray for a job and God wants to give us a calling. We want to be less lonely and God wants us to be open to love. We pray not to fail and God wants us to succeed.

This scripture is a great story about being encouraged to believe in God with high expectations. The widow is in a tough spot and desperately needs God's help. We have no idea what she thinks Elijah can do about it but he asks her to believe as big as she can. She is told to borrow every container that she possibly can – from baby food jars to rain barrels! God is literally going to give her as much as she can hold.

Apparently she takes his words to heart. She receives enough olive oil to pay off all her debts with some to spare for current and future expenses. God blessed her high expectations.

I think we sometimes think that God is stingy. We envision him giving just enough to get by. Instead, we have a heavenly Father who loves us. He wants us to believe that he can supply all our needs and more. Go to him with high expectations and see what he may do.

**Thursday, April 4**

**Homecoming**

*Reading: Psalm 126 and Isaiah 43:-17*

*“Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, “Give them up!” and to the south, “Do not hold them back.””*

Speaking of high expectations, these two readings give us high hopes for the future. Part of their vision was fulfilled in ancient times, part of it has been fulfilled in our times and part is yet to come.

In the first instance, they are about Israel's return from Exile in Babylon. Seventy years after they were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar the Exiles or their children began to return to Israel with the permission of the Persian King. Psalm 126 speaks of the joy of the returning exile. Isaiah 43 speaks of the joy of those left behind in Israel as their sons and daughter are brought home.

Secondly, these passages speak of the miraculous rebirth of the nation of Israel in the twentieth century. After almost nineteen hundred years of non-existence as a country, Israel was reborn and he descendants of Abraham began to return to the Promised Land. There is no parallel in human history to this development after such a long period of time. The dream of every Passover – “next year in Jerusalem” could only have come about because God had promised it would be so.

Finally, these scriptures speak to the great homecoming in the new heaven and earth. When the new Jerusalem descends, people of every race and nation will stream from the four corners of the globe to rejoice and dwell in the presence of God.

If you dwell far from family and friends or if you have loved ones in heaven itself, visualize this wonderful reunion that is in the future. God has made it come true again and again and he will do it yet again for one final time.

**Friday, April 5**

**The Sole Saviour**

*Reading: Isaiah 53:8-15*

*“Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no saviour.”*

A while ago I watched a ‘reality’ show about two antique hunters who scour the American west for cowboy antiques. On one episode they came across an old patent medicine bottle. It was noted that patent medicine sellers at one time were extremely common. They laced alcohol with a variety of spices or other flavour ingredients. The alcohol usually gave the customer a temporary lift, but they were almost all useless as actual medicines. While we may be tempted to shake our heads at the gullibility of people back then, note the abundance of fake cures on the Internet today. When people are in pain or in need we will reach out for any kind of help.

In Isaiah 43, as God calls his people back to Israel he declares the gods of the nations to be nothing more than fake medicine. There were no other gods before the One True God and there will be none after. The promoters of Baal and Asherah and Chemosh and countless others are hucksters. There is only one true Creator and Saviour.

Christians are sometimes criticized for being exclusive in declaring that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Rather than getting into debates, a better approach may be to highlight the effectiveness of the real thing. Just like a patient who sings the praises of a particular treatment or dentist or health professional, we have the opportunity to point others to the One who has blessed us spiritually and in other ways.

Someone has described evangelism as “one beggar telling another beggar where to find food”. In Christ there is true help and hope.

**Saturday, April 6**

**The Blood of the Lamb**

*Reading: Exodus 12:21-27*

*“Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the door-frame.”*

At the end of a church service recently we concluded with a hymn that spoke repeatedly about the blood of Christ washing away our sins. I really like that song but in the midst of it I wondered if it sounded strange, even bizarre, to anyone who might have been visiting who had no background in the teaching of the Bible.

The constant emphasis upon blood sacrifice in the Old Testament was meant to drive home the point that sin kills. The life was seen to be in the blood. Rebellion against God leads to spiritual and, eventually, physical death. To free us from death and separation from God, life must be given.

The most powerful observance of this was and is that of the Passover. Coincidentally, this year Passover falls on our Easter weekend, as it did when Christ gave his life for us on the cross. The hours that Christ spent on the cross were accompanied by the bleating of thousands of Passover lambs in and around Jerusalem. As they were being sacrificed and their blood was being put on the doors of homes, Christ was shedding his blood for us. And as they rose the next morning, remembering how they had been saved from the angel of death in the time of Pharaoh, we celebrate our salvation and liberation from death for evermore.

Being cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ sounds strange to modern, secular ears. It seems barbaric and politically incorrect. But it graphically emphasizes the seriousness of sin and the cost of life separated from God.

It also magnifies the love of Christ who is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

