

In 2026, the season of Lent starts on February 18. Lent is the 40 day time period between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. Christians in different church traditions around the world observe Lent in different ways, and for some communities, it is a new idea. For many Christians, Lent is a time to make extra space for prayer, reading the Bible and reflecting on God's love and provision. Traditionally, celebrating Lent includes fasting and generous acts of giving.

There is a story in the Bible that likely many of you know. The story of Noah's ark. When telling that story, if we are talking to children, we usually focus on the animals, and in conversation with adults, we usually talk about Noah's willingness to follow God's word and God's faithfulness and commitment after the flood. During Lent, people often think of the ark, for 40 days people were in the ark, the water was swirling around, the water was seen first as all of the troubles of the world. And then we remember Jesus's 40 days in the wilderness and the way that after that time he is named as "Beloved" during his baptism. We can think of Lent as a time to be worn down by the water swirling around the ark, and the time in the desert. And when all that is false is worn away, and our hearts are broken open in love, we can help to create a new world, we can fully make space for God and see that more beautiful world that God longs for.

The reflections you will find here are from the diverse Christian community of Nepali and Global staff at United Mission to Nepal. We have paired the lectionary texts with [United Mission to Nepal values](#), which focus our work and help us to join in God's labour to bring about that more beautiful world, the Kingdom of God. We hope these reflections, stories and videos help you to reflect on building the kingdom of God. We hope these devotions also help with your Lenten preparation, self-reflection and offer an opportunity to grow in faith.



Ash Wednesday

Reflection by Katherine Parker

Home Church: Mt. Tamalpais United Methodist Church, Mill Valley, California, United States

Katherine has been serving as a Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor with UMN since 2013

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Imagine a renewing of our hearts

Periods of Lent in our lives – those seasons we describe as wilderness or preparation – rarely arrive according to the church calendar. And yet, setting aside time each year to reimagine our relationship with God and renew our interior spiritual practices can become a place of growth that prepares us for the challenges that inevitably arise. For several months, I have felt as though I am wandering in such a wilderness. I know God has used me, and I trust God will continue to use me, but in the moment, I often feel lost. Spiritual practices have become less about deepening my awareness of God and more about simply keeping me afloat.

I am grateful for the church calendar because it reminds me that I am not alone in this experience. Lent comes again and again throughout our lives. In my own moments of sadness or uncertainty, I remember the many times Jesus withdrew to spend time with God in spiritual preparation. In today's passage from Matthew 6, Jesus invites us into another kind of withdrawal, one that leads us into a secret place where our acts of devotion are offered not for display but as quiet expressions of love for God.

This movement inward is not an escape from the world but an awakening to it. Jesus' teaching evokes imagination, that is, the sacred capacity to see beyond what is broken and to trust that mercy can remake what empire has disfigured. This imagination is not fanciful but courageous. It believes that healing is possible even when violence, poverty, and inequity seem immovable.

The work of the United Mission to Nepal reflects this same holy imagining. A hallmark of UMN's approach is the creation of safe spaces for dialogue where trusting relationships allow new ideas to emerge. Again and again, in my work as a monitoring and evaluation advisor, I have witnessed the transformation that comes from such spaces. I think of individuals who have discovered their voice: who can now share with pride that they have spoken in public forums for the first time, talked with their children's teachers, or advocated for change in their communities. Their ability to engage publicly has been hard won, shaped through long periods of preparation in private places.

Ash Wednesday reminds us that this labour is never solitary. Jesus' words call us into a shared journey of repentance and renewal. We are on a communal path where we encourage one another to resist despair and choose love that endures. When we fast, pray, or give in secret, we are not withdrawing from the world; we are training our hearts to see God at work in unexpected places, strengthening our imagination for justice.

In Nepal and around the world, communities long for such holy labour – for relationships rooted in genuine compassion and hope. Lent invites us to step into that work with humility: to let our hearts be reshaped, our habits reordered, and our treasures relocated from earthly acclaim to God's enduring Kingdom.

Prayer:

As the ashes mark our foreheads today, may they also mark a beginning:

A beginning of deeper trust.

A beginning of shared labour.

A beginning of imagining the world as God dreams it—remade by mercy, healed in community, and renewed by love that refuses to give up.

Week 1



Reflection by Eric Cheng

Home Church: Coquitlam Alliance, British Columbia, Canada

Eric and his family live in Tansen, where his wife is a physiotherapist at the United Mission Hospital Tansen. They have been in Nepal for 3.5 years.

Connecting Resources:

Story: [No Stopping Janak](#)

Video: [Life of a Shepherd](#)

Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus in the wilderness

UMN Value: Innovation & Creativity

Necessity is often called the mother of innovation. In resource-limited contexts, creativity and innovation are not luxuries—they are essential for survival. Yet Scripture reminds us that it is precisely in places of need that the Lord shows Himself to be **all we need**, not merely for survival, but for flourishing (John 10:10b).

In Matthew 4, Jesus faces three temptations from the Devil himself. Each temptation invites Him to use His divine power to solve a very real problem. This comes immediately after His baptism, where the Father publicly and supernaturally affirms Him as His beloved Son. Yet Jesus chooses not to grasp at power. Instead, He fully identifies with humanity and resists temptation **as a man**, anchored in the Word of God and in trust in His Father.

God is **Jehovah Jireh**—the One who provides, even before we can name the need. Nothing catches Him by surprise; there is nothing new under the sun for Him (Eccl 1:9). In Him, we lack no good thing (Ps 23:1). He reigns over both the possible and the impossible. Still, the enemy works tirelessly to shift our focus—from God to our hunger, our pride, our power, our fears or our self-reliance. When we are not rooted in God's truth, our natural response is often anxiety, striving, or any number of unhelpful actions.

Jesus shows us another way. In a state of starvation, He chooses trust in His Father over self-provision and rests in perfect peace (Isa 26:3). In every temptation, He responds with Scripture from Deuteronomy 6–8, pointing again and again to the unchanging faithfulness of God and humanity's deep dependence on Him.

Less than a year ago, our family moved to Tansen. Since then, through God's creative and innovative provision, He has brought together equipment and clinicians to establish a bi-weekly lung function testing clinic at United Mission Hospital. Patients with asthma and COPD can now be accurately diagnosed and treated with measurable outcomes—something unavailable anywhere else in this district. And remarkably, this has been done with **no additional ongoing cost to the hospital**.

This is the same God who sent an east wind to part the Red Sea, and who gave His Son to defeat death once and for all. God is the **Creative Creator** and the ultimate Innovator,

delighting to reveal Himself in ways that draw us closer to Him. With this in mind, I consider what impossible situation I find myself in at any given time, and how God might be using this to draw me deeper into His presence.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus—the Author and Perfecter of our faith—who fixed His eyes on His unchanging Father when tempted.

Prayer

Lord, You alone are God—unchanging through time. Teach us to fall into Your arms, to trust Your provision, to find our full satisfaction in Your presence and boldly proclaim Your goodness. Amen.

Week 2



Reflection by Clare Grimble

Home Church: Oak Tree Anglican Fellowship, UK

Clare works as the Rehabilitation Advisor for Community Based Inclusive Development and Physiotherapy Department in Okhaldhunga Community Hospital. She has lived in Nepal off and on since 2003.

connecting Resources:

Story: [Wheel chair brings hope](#)

Video: [How physiotherapy changed a life](#)

Jesus and Nicodemus

John 3:1-17 & (non lectionary) Luke 14: 12-24

UMN Value: Special concern for the poor and marginalised

When Nicodemus approaches Jesus in the night, he is curious about what he has been hearing about Jesus. He, too, is a learned man and has studied the scriptures, but Jesus baffles him. And Jesus's answers just confuse him further. Perhaps Nicodemus needed to spend more time with Jesus in the hills and in the streets, so he could hear Jesus' everyday stories, the stories of a kingdom not for the rich, but of God's special concern for the poor and marginalised. One of these stories tells about a banquet being prepared. On one level, this parable can be understood as a practical call to welcome and invite the poor and those with disabilities into his Kingdom. It is a call to do things differently, like Jesus tells Nicodemus, to look toward those heavenly things. We see this theme repeated throughout Jesus' ministry where broken people are made whole, their dignity restored, become a valuable part of society, and in many cases, enter the Kingdom of God.

On another level, this parable is a warning to those who show reluctance to come to God and his banquet. Who are these people? They are, perhaps surprisingly, the well-off: the ones who own land and animals, for whom life seems to be going well and who appear to have no need of God. Perhaps they are those like Nicodemus, the ones who have learned and think they know about the scriptures, or the ones who come in the night, nervous and afraid.

The work I am part of at Okhaldhunga Community Hospital in Nepal, in both the Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) work and through my physiotherapy, brings me in daily contact with the poor and the marginalised, fulfilling arguably the most defining value of UMN – a 'special concern for the poor and marginalised'. We have the privilege of demonstrating these people they are valuable human beings made in the image of God, helping them to find healing and wholeness through our project work and hospital services, and thereby introducing them to the God who loves them deeply and longs for them to live with him - so that his house is full (Luke 14: 23). I am often moved by their humility and readiness to trust in and depend on God. And they are blessed! 'God blesses those who are poor and realise their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.' (Matthew 5:3, NLT) Some – often those with the most severe disabilities, such as spinal cord injuries, long to know God and experience the blessings he brings into their lives – not

only material provision, but the spiritual blessings of forgiveness, the promise of eternal life, his love, his joy and peace – the banquet.

If we examine ourselves honestly, are we also not 'poor' in a spiritual sense? When we do this can take the risk like Nicodemus and come to Jesus. And there we learn from him, and we become kinder and more compassionate towards the visibly poor and those with disabilities, as we begin to identify more closely with them. Our common identity as all being made in the image of God reminds us that we are actually not that different.

So, may we too not miss out on the invitation to God's banquet. We may have said yes to him and committed our lives to following him, but do we say yes to him daily? Moment by moment? Let us be people who, recognising our own 'poverty' – our weaknesses, choose continually to die to ourselves, let God's power work through us, and walk in humility and dependence on Him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to come to you in humility and let you turn our weaknesses into strengths as we serve you, so that we too say yes to your invitation to your banquet in the Kingdom of God.

Week 3



Reflection by Bina Malla

Home Church- Nepali Isai Mandali

Bina has worked at UMN for 26 years. She has had various roles and is currently the project manager for Integral Development in the Lumbini Cluster.

Connected Resources:

Story: [Rukum Environmental community](#)

Video: [Ponds in Kapilvastu](#)

Water from a Rock

Exodus 17:1-7

UMN value: care for the environment

I am one of the oldest staff members of UMN, having served since 1999. My first job at UMN began as an intern, became a lifelong calling shaped by God's grace and faithfulness. Over the years, God has allowed me to grow in knowledge, skills, and capacity, walking with UMN through different seasons and responsibilities.

During this long journey, my personal life was also transformed. After the death of my mother, I lived alone for some time, but God graciously blessed me with marriage, two beautiful children, a loving and caring husband, and the comfort of living and working in my hometown, Kathmandu. I often felt content and settled, thinking life was complete just as it was.

However, after 25 years of living in these comforts, God revealed another plan for my life. My role changed, and I was transferred to the Tarai cluster for a new role. Leaving behind my family, friends, and familiar surroundings was not easy. The Tarai brought new challenges, extreme heat in summer, cold in winter, different people, culture, and food and a life far from comfort and companionship. Yet, it has now been ten months since I moved, and through God's grace, I have discovered joy and purpose in this new chapter. Once again, I am experiencing a season of living independently while working closely with faith-based groups.

This season of Lent invites me to reflect deeply on trust, obedience, and God's provision. The story in Exodus 17:1-7, where God brings water from a rock for the thirsty Israelites, speaks powerfully to my journey. The people complained, doubted, and feared, yet God remained faithful. He provided life-giving water in a dry and barren place. In the same way, God has sustained me in moments of uncertainty and transition.

This passage also reminds me of UMN's value of care for the environment, particularly the precious gift of water. Water is life, physically and spiritually. As God's people, we are called not only to trust Him for provision but also to steward His creation responsibly. During Lent, I am reminded to live simply, consume mindfully, and care intentionally for the environment, recognising it as God's sacred gift.

I thank God for His continuous guidance, protection, and provision, both in familiar comforts and unfamiliar deserts. Just as He provided water from the rock, He continues to refresh my faith and renew my purpose.

Prayer

Gracious and faithful God, we thank you, Lord, for your unfailing love and provision. As you brought water from the rock for the thirsty Israelites, you continue to meet us in our dry and difficult seasons. During this time of Lent, help us to trust you even when the path ahead feels uncertain.

Lord, teach us to listen to your voice and to walk in obedience, knowing that you are present with us in every transition and challenge. We confess that, like the Israelites, we often doubt and complain instead of trusting in your promises. Forgive us, and renew our faith.

We thank you for the gift of creation, especially water—the source of life. Help us to care for the environment with responsibility and gratitude. May we use natural resources wisely, protect what you have entrusted to us, and act justly toward future generations.

We place our trust in you, our Provider and Sustainer. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Week 4



Reflection by Parsu Ram Karkee

Home church: Nissi Niwas Assembly of God Church, Kathmandu

Parsu works as the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning Manager

connecting Resources:

Story: [Women's group](#)

Ephesians 5:8-14

UMN Value: Integrity

When I was a young and aimless person, I converted to the Christian faith. I am from the eastern part of Nepal, Okhaldhunga District, where UMN has been working through hospital service and community development work. When I was a child, around the age of 5, I was a patient at the Okhaldhunga Hospital, where I had a critical surgery. I survived. This surgery was done by a missionary doctor, and before he made me unconscious, he prayed for me. Even though I was young, I still remember the time I first heard the name of Jesus. Later on, one missionary from UMN stayed in our village to support education, agriculture, and health. It was from him that I first read the New Testament, and it was 10 years later that I became a follower of Jesus, and my life was transformed from darkness to light in the Lord.

I joined UMN in 2015, and my current work is in monitoring, evaluation and accountability of development projects. I help ensure projects are done to appropriate standards and outcomes. One of the core values of UMN is integrity, and it guides all of my work and personal life. I am clear that one day I must stand in front of God's judgement, but on a daily basis I work to reflect integrity in my decisions, and action and demonstrate that to others. I do this in how I spend my time, how I use resources and offer support to colleagues. I work to protect organisational values and avoid personal gain. Sometimes, standing up in this way is difficult in Nepal. One way that I gain strength to live my faith in this way is by actively participating in the UMN Wednesday prayer and devotion. This practice has been recharging for me and sparks the Light of God and calls daily attention to His gracious work. I often think of the phrase, "God's work, My hands." Furthermore, this weekly practice of prayer meeting and devotion refuels me and binds me to my Christian colleagues in unity to seek the kingdom of God. This weekly connection motivates me to live out UMN values guided by the UMN mission.

Gracious God, we uphold your mighty name that in all we do and all we encounter, through the projects, partners, participants and our colleagues, we will see you. We see many who are cloaked in shadows, ruled by fear and caught in poverty. We pray to God for their freedom, that their eyes may be opened to recognise you as the true God and Light. Amen.

Week 5



Reflection by Rima Butler

Home Church: Dillingham Bible Fellowship, United States

Rima works as a Family Medicine Physician and the Hospital Medical Coordinator at Okhaldhunga Community Hospital. She has been in Nepal for 4 years.

connecting Resources:

Story: [Journey to Healing](#)

Video: [Tansen Hospital](#)

The death/resurrection of Lazarus

John 11:1-45

UMN value: Love and Service

As I write this reflection, it's cold, the "I got stuck outside too long and I can't get warm again" kind of cold. Thankfully, the cold that is seeping into my bones is a sign of rain in the western parts of the country and here in Okhaldhunga, earlier today a tiny drizzle too. I can only imagine that Martha and Mary's hearts might have been chilled to the core with the sorrow of losing their brother, their anchor, their protector. Even more chilling to their grieving hearts, though, might have been their sense of betrayal that Jesus, the healer, did not come when they called. The one they believed to be the Christ, the Messiah of God, who worked miracles for others in the power of God. Where was HE? Had He found the fear of men, the Jews, too much to come to them? Did he not care?

He came... slowly. In the slowness of love beyond their imaginings. In the steadiness of a bigger hope and confident assurance of the Father's strength. In the measuredness of "for your sake, I am glad I was not there."

He came...entering their sorrow, their questions, weeping. "Lord, if you had been here..." "Lord, if you had been here..." "Couldn't he..." In the faith that longs to believe yet is caught in the reality of death, we hear Martha saying, "Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." And "He wept!"

He came angry. Angry at the evil that is death, separation, and loss. This righteous anger, this sorrowing heart came to the tomb and spoke the impossible into being. To display the Father's heart, to foretell that sin and death and the grave have no hold on those who believe. To demonstrate the Father's glory... "Lazarus, come out!"

We continue to live in this sin-marred world where death has been condemned but still holds a grip. Our eyes and hearts confirm the brokenness of sin and flesh remain. We long for healing, and we work for peace and restoration. Sometimes we weep, sometimes we rage. Sometimes our hearts go cold in the waiting.

We wait, though, with the confidence of those "who saw all that happened and put their

trust in Him.” He came...He Comes!

Thematic Prayer:

Lord Jesus, your family spans ethnicity, class, and culture. It crosses the borders of the city, country and continent... As I go about my day today, I confess that I’m often blinded by my plans, needs and wants – blinded to the needs and wants of others. I ask that right now you would open my eyes to see as you do... May I carry your love to each person I encounter – seeing and seeking others as you saw Mary and Martha in their grief.

May I come in your love, willing to lay my life down in obedience and sacrificial love. May Martha’s confidence be mine. Lord Jesus, you are “the resurrection and the life... Everyone who lives and believes in you will never die.”

May I see your resurrecting work in the places of my heart that I keep hidden from view and believe you for your resurrecting work in the messed-up structures of our world. May the grief of the grave not overwhelm me but spur me on to believe that your glory will be revealed in victory both today in the world around me and in the coming of our Lord Jesus as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and rich in mercy, as we enter the world today, may we go filled to overflowing with the Love of the Father. May we each lay our lives down in the sacrificial love of the Son, and may we be spurred on in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Adapted from Lectio 365 App, February 26th and 28th Midday Prayers

Week 6



Reflection by Bir Bahadur Bashyal

Home church: Bhaktapur Holy Church, Balkot, Nepal

Bir works as the Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Manager

connecting Resources:

Video: [Shanti and the Buffalo](#)

Story: [Change begins with me \(husband\)](#)

The triumphal entry

Matthew 21:1-17

UMN value: equity and social justice

“Equality and Social Justice” is one of UMN’s six core values that is grounded in the fact that God created every human being with equal value and dignity. At UMN, we work to reveal God's compassion to everyone by putting this value into practice. When this is done, it ensures equal access to everyone esp. for those who are marginalised and excluded from the opportunities, resources, and services they require. This includes not only having prospered in their physical wellbeing but also spiritual empowerment, indeed as well.

In order to do this, UMN upholds strong commitments through its Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) policy that provides practical strategies and frameworks using Jesus as a model of inclusion, equality and justice. This guides all of our teams, including partners, to intentionally address discrimination, social barriers and unequal power relations that prevent people from participating fully in social and political structures. UMN believes that inequality is often structural and embedded in social norms and its practices; therefore, we work not only to provide services and provisions but also to identify and remove these barriers.

According to Mathew 21:1-16 from the Bible, Jesus’s entry on a donkey to Jerusalem made people shout “Hosanna”, which means “Jesus Save Us”. Jesus demonstrated humility to the people. And afterward cleared the temple, challenging the unjust and hierarchical systems and practices that were exploiting people. He overturned the tables and said to the people this house is for prayer, but people made it a den of robbers (Verse 12-13). He stands here against corruption, injustice, and misuse of sacred space. He confronted practices of creating barriers and exclusion for these people. Very importantly, Jesus welcomed and healed the people with physical disabilities and visual impaired at the temple who were often excluded from full religious and social participation (Vese 14).

UMN’s value of equality and social justice, and our GEDSI policy and framework, reflect this approach to challenge such systematic barriers and abuse of power that prevent women, persons with disabilities, so-called low-caste Dalits, and other marginalised groups from fully participating in community life in a true sense. With this, UMN acts to break the poverty trap by identifying the root cause, not the symptoms and seeking sustainable impact in the fullness of life throughout the entire organisational system and program

cycles

Prayer

Dear almighty God, you, in your infinite wisdom, created us all in your image. You made each one of us different and unique so that we enjoy each other and enjoy your kingdom. May we see your face in those we encounter, especially those we might see as less than or unworthy and restore their dignity with equal opportunity and justice.

In the mighty name of Jesus, who restores all,

Amen



Easter Sunday

Reflection by Lora Nafziger

Home Congregation: Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana, United States

Lora and her family have lived in Kathmandu for two years. She works as Staff Care and Counselling Advisor.

Mathew 28:1-10

I have experienced that grief. That need to be still, and the need to weep. The world is full of times of loss and death. It is something we all understand. At UMN, we work hard to give people a dignified life, to offer opportunities to make changes that are personal, communal and deep-rooted, so that life is changed fully. But even when we do everything right, we always know that death catches up. It is cancer, a car accident, a revolution. Then, like the women and the disciples, like the friends of Jesus, we have to see death up close. And it's not just those personal experiences that remind us of death, it is the possibility of climate disaster, of landslides and earthquakes; these too remind us that death can always find us. No one has trouble believing in death.

But in addition to grief, I have found love. I have met kindness, I have been changed in community and in conversations. I have seen people's lives lifted in big and little ways, and when we are changed, it is wonderful, and sometimes it is terrifying. Craig Barnes, author of *Sacred Thirst: Meeting God in the Desert of our Longings*, says that death is not the frightening ending of the story. It is Easter, the resurrection that is frightening. Because, "when we get a good look into the tomb three days later, everything is unwrapped. Nothing is as we left it. Nothing is as it should be. Now, we cannot even count on death. Easter has changed the rules." Barnes reminds us, as he goes on to say, "But if death is *not* waiting at the end, then everything in life has to change. We have to start over. We have to discover a whole new purpose for life... The point of life is to discover a death-defying hope." ¹ This hope changes how we see ourselves. It changes how we live. We are required to act and ask like Jesus did: "What are you looking for? --- What have you found?"

Dhana Lama, executive director of UMN offers these reflections on Easter and the work of UMN, "This is such a privilege to experience His Grace, reminding me of my unworthiness, but His love and His death on the Cross for me, while I am still unworthy, has redeemed me and given me the faith and hope of eternal life in Him and experience His Kingdom. It humbles and inspires me. In addition, it has also given me a privilege to demonstrate His love in and through UMN, to make a positive difference, to embrace the concept of Fullness of Life for all, in a transformed Nepali society. I am very grateful to God for the opportunity to serve and journey towards shalom. May God enable us to continue to experience His Grace and also be His witness. Amen!"

¹ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/april1/3.46.html>

M. Craig Barnes is pastor of National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., and the author of *Sacred Thirst: Meeting God in the Desert of Our Longings* (Zondervan).

May we find ourselves at Easter, surprised by the resurrection and what love has done, surprised at the way that Lent has cleansed and refined us. May our old selves, our masks and even death be worn away, and our hearts broken open in love. And as we are changed, may we make space for God and see our role in that more beautiful world that God longs for- The fullness of life for all.