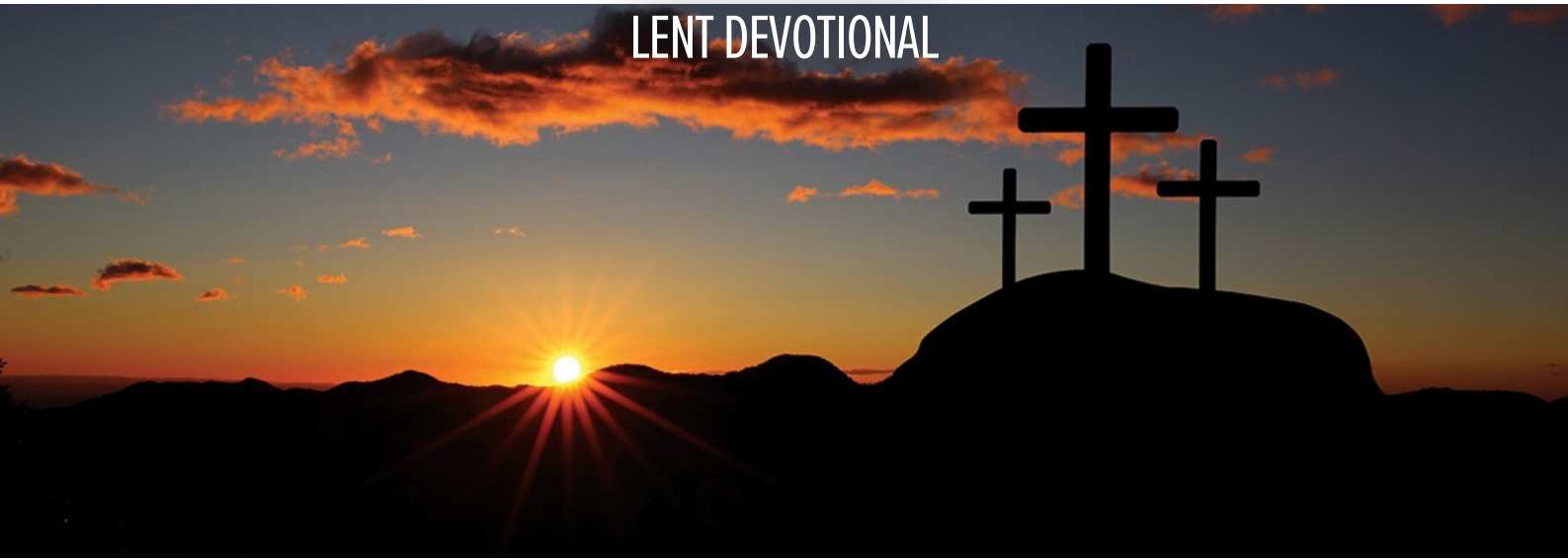


LENT DEVOTIONAL



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LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 11, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:13-22

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples - for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

DEVOTIONAL

“Drive your cart and plough over the bones of the dead.”- William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790)

This Blakean proverb has always struck me as true, despite its initial disorienting harshness. At first glance, Blake’s directive sounds barbarous. Who in their right mind would drive a vehicle over someone else’s bones, burying them? But a second read reminds me that plowing bones into the earth enriches the dirt, making it more productive for growth. A bag of fish meal dug into a backyard garden makes for healthier soil and root development and produces a greater bounty of vegetables. Flowers and trees often grow very well on top of graves. Allowing the old to decompose into the soil of life provides sustenance for creative and spiritual growth.

For some reason, Blake’s dictum always makes me think of Jesus’ teaching in the Gospel about the old wineskins. It’s a very different analogy, but the renewing spirit is the same. If you want to enjoy new wine, you have to get rid of those inflexible old containers, which are unable to hold the fresh liquid. Having settled into a particular shape, the old skins are not elastic; freshly pressed and fermented wine will simply burst the skins, resulting in lost wine and useless vessels.

I know that driving my cart and plough over old bones is good for my garden of spirituality and creativity because it makes possible new growth, but I am very reluctant to release those old bones into the dirt. Though we may know it is good to shed old wineskins to make way for the new wine, most of us have a hard time discarding the old stuff. Letting go is not easy.

But Lent gives us a time to reflect on doing just that. This season is an opportunity to bury those old bones and let them fertilize the ground, to discard the old wineskins, so that we might enjoy new wine and to grow into new life.

PRAYER

This Lenten season, we pray that God might grace us with the strength and courage to let go of the old wineskins, to plant the old bones in the dirt, so that we might be filled with new wine, bear witness to new growth, and cultivate a new life in Christ. Amen.

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