

**Devotions for the First Week of Lent -- Sunday, March 10 to Saturday, March 16**  
**Contemplations on Feelings of Shame and Worthlessness**

**Lament**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?  
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
And by night, but find no rest.  
But I am a worm, and not human;  
Scorned by others, and despised by the people.  
Do not be far from me,  
For trouble is near and there is no one to help.

**Psalm 22: 1-2, 6, 11**

**Readings**

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*

**1 John 3:1a**

*Know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ.*

**1 Peter 1: 18-19**

*Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."  
So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

*Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

**Luke 15:1-10, Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin**

*Church language often communicates, "Come and get plugged into what we are doing! We have a place for you. We have amazing things going on." That can translate to: "There is something wrong with you. You are not fulfilled. You are working at a deficit...." But consider Jesus' parables of the lost coin [and] the lost sheep.... We can get caught up in the lostness of each, but really we believe Jesus is [emphasizing] the worth [of what was] being found.... They had great value as they [already] were.*

**The Neighboring Church, Rick Rusaw and Brian Davis, pp 30-31.**

## Reflection

Often the messages we get in our day-to-day lives about what makes us “valuable” or “useful” are very different from the Bible’s message that God loves us unconditionally. It can be a struggle to fully accept and live into God’s love and grace.

- What in your experience of church life has been an encouragement to you when you were feeling down on yourself?
- Has a casual acquaintance or short encounter with someone ever made you feel more worthwhile, more like a beloved child of God? If yes, how, exactly?
- How might we be a “balm” to those who are discouraged, even if we don’t yet know them well?

## Hymn

There is a balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole;  
There is a balm in Gilead  
To save a sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged,  
and think my work’s in vain.  
But then the Holy Spirit  
revives my soul again.

If you can’t preach like Peter,  
if you can’t pray like Paul,  
just tell the love of Jesus,  
and say he died for all.

There is a balm in Gilead  
to make the wounded whole;  
there is a balm in Gilead  
to heal the sin-sick soul.

From **United Methodist Hymnal** #375;

Hear Mahalia Jackson at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFMY4V7RdbU>

## Prayer

Loving God,  
You have claimed me as your precious child.  
You have redeemed me; you have stamped me with a mark of great worth.  
As you sustain me, help me to sustain others.  
Strengthen and soften me, that I may be a friend and a comfort.  
Let me see Your face in every Neighbor and Guest.  
In Jesus name, Amen.