

**Devotions for the Fifth Week of Lent -- Sunday, April 7 to Saturday, April 13**  
**Contemplations on Addiction and Mental Illness**

**Lament**

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;  
My eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.  
For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing;  
My strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.  
I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors,  
An object of dread to my acquaintances;  
Those who see me in the street flee from me.  
I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;  
I have become like a broken vessel.  
For I hear the whispering of many – terror all around! –  
As they scheme together against me,  
As they plot to take my life.

**Psalm 31: 9-13**

**Readings**

*It was the singing [at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church] that pulled me in and split me wide open...  
Something inside me that was stiff and rotting would feel soft and tender. Somehow the singing wore  
down all the boundaries and distinctions that kept me so isolated. Sitting there, standing with them to  
sing, sometimes so shaky and sick that I felt like I might tip over, I felt bigger than myself, like I was ...  
tricked into coming back to life.*

**Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith**

Essays by Anne Lamott on her alcoholism and conversion to Christianity

*My husband once went into a depression so severe that he had to be hospitalized for several weeks. [I  
was staying at a Benedictine] convent near the hospital, where [I had been offered] a guest room for as  
long as I needed it. There is no way I can measure the help they gave me....*

*[I told one of the sisters] that I felt that my Lent had just been handed to me on a platter: a total  
upheaval of my life, and my marriage. But, I added, I had begun to see that my husband's breakdown  
might be a good thing, after all. At least in the long run. He could not have gone on hiding the extent of  
his depression from me. But now that the lie had split wide open, and he had really broken, I thought  
that there would be a chance for him to heal. Once the initial shock had worn off, our situation no  
longer seemed like a disaster. My husband was in a safe place, being well cared for. My pastor, the  
sisters, and the monk who was the hospital chaplain, had cared for me. My family had been wonderful,  
and friends from everywhere had offered invaluable moral support.*

**Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith** -- Essays by Kathleen Norris on her conversion,  
writing, and experiences with Benedictine monasticism

*That evening they brought to [Jesus] many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the  
spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick.*

**Matthew 8:16**

## Reflections

It is a catastrophe of our time and place that so many wrestle with addictions, or struggle with obsessions and unhealthy thoughts due to mental illness.

- In your experience, what are the best examples of how church life can comfort and help those in such situations?
- Do you feel that you could estimate how many people in our congregation are affected by these issues – either themselves, or a close family member? If it were you or your family, how many others would know? How does respect for privacy affect a church's ability to help?
- Facing addiction or mental illness can strip away our protective layers and allow profound changes to take hold in our attitudes, including toward God. How can we create a space in our church that allows such changes to take root in fruitful ways?

## Hymn

My hope is built on nothing less  
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand!

When Darkness veils his lovely face,  
I rest on his unchanging grace.  
In every high and stormy gale,  
my anchor holds within the veil.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand!

His oath, his covenant, his blood  
supports me in the whelming flood.  
When all around my soul gives way,  
he then is all my hope and stay.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand!

When he shall come with trumpet sound,  
O may I then in him be found!  
Dressed in his righteousness alone,  
faultless to stand before the throne!

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand!

### **My Hope is Built, United Methodist Hymnal #368**

See an ecstatic version by the Alabama A&M Gospel Choir at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTohQpt7rX4&list=RDRN\\_uVXCiblg&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTohQpt7rX4&list=RDRN_uVXCiblg&index=2)

## Prayer

Dearest Lord God,  
I know that You are powerful to save.  
Help our church to be a place of refuge and healing – in whatever form is beneficial – to individuals and families riven by the troubles of addiction and mental illness. And reveal to me my part.

In the Name of Christ our Beloved Healer, Amen