

A large, leafless tree silhouette stands prominently in the center of the frame. The sun is positioned directly behind the tree's trunk, creating a bright, glowing effect. The sky is a soft, hazy orange and yellow, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The bottom of the image shows a calm body of water reflecting the light.

# Courage

Reflect on the word Courage. Take a few moments to think, to hope and to pray about how God might create courage in your life. How might your reflection shape you, change you and join you and Christ together? After you have taken a few minutes to reflect here, turn the page and read further.

# The Seventeenth Day of Lent

Monday, March 8, 2010

## Invocation

O Holy God,  
open unto me light for my darkness,  
courage for my fear,  
hope for my despair.

O Loving God,  
open unto me wisdom for my confusion,  
forgiveness for my sins,  
love for my hate.

O God of peace,  
open unto me peace for my turmoil,  
joy for my sorrow,  
strength for my weakness.

O generous God,  
open my heart to receive all your gifts. Amen.  
– United Methodist Hymnal, #489

## Reflection

Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem. Like all of his ministry, this is an act of great courage. His disciples also begin the journey toward Jerusalem, but they seem not to understand what it really means to follow Jesus. When Jesus foretells his suffering and death, Peter takes him aside and admonishes him not to talk that way. The disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus' message and mission continue as the journey progresses. Jesus speaks of servanthood; the disciples argue over who will sit at his right and left in the coming kingdom. Jesus stresses forgiveness; the disciples struggle over how many times they might be required to forgive someone and are shocked when Jesus says: "Seventy times seven." Jesus predicts that it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven; the disciples are perplexed and wonder who then can be saved. Jesus reaches out to the marginalized and most vulnerable in their midst; the disciples sternly order a blind beggar to keep quiet and not disturb the Master. Jesus tells a parable about workers who come at the end of the day being paid as much as those who labor all day; the disciples grumble that they have left everything to follow him and want reassurance that they will be rewarded. Did it take courage for the disciples to follow Jesus to Jerusalem? Does it take courage to follow Jesus today? Perhaps not, if like the disciples, we refuse to listen to what he says. But what if we take

seriously becoming a servant to all, forgiving those who have wronged us, not trusting in wealth for our identity and security, reaching out in concrete ways to the most vulnerable around us, and doing all this, not for a final reward in heaven, but because we truly love God whom we serve. Now that, takes courage.

## Hymn

*"God of grace and God of glory,  
on thy people pour thy power;  
crown thine ancient church's story;  
bring her bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour."  
– United Methodist Hymnal #577*

## Benediction

*May you be enriched by your observance of Lent,  
and may God fill your heart and mind with  
wisdom, love and understanding. Amen.*

*Your reflections...*

## *The Eighteenth Day of Lent*

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

*"And so we came to Rome. The believers from there, when they heard of us, came as far as the Forum of Appius, and the Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage."*

– Acts 28: 14b-15

Paul had often longed to travel to Rome, to bring a blessing to the Christian believers there. His final journey was long and perilous. He was shipwrecked on the way. When he arrived in Rome, under arrest, he was still uncertain about whether or not he would be welcomed by the Christians there. Despite the obstacles, Paul was determined to bring his message to Rome. What a joy and what a relief it must have been when these believers from Rome came out to meet him. Luke says that Paul thanked God and took courage.

We never walk alone in the Christian faith. When we step out in faith, there are always believers there to meet us. Often those we seek to bless, turn out to be the very ones who bless us and give us courage. Where would you go in your Christian journey if you had the courage? Paul yearned to travel to the farthest limits of the known world. Travel to the very limits of your imagination. Where do you find yourself? Step out. Take courage. There are believers there waiting to meet you.

*Your reflections. . .*

## *The Nineteenth Day of Lent*

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

*"Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"*

– Psalm 27:14

Psalm 27 has been called "a triumphant song of confidence;" and yet, it is sung by one who is besieged by personal tragedy and disappointment. In the midst of it all, the Psalmist finds strength and courage in waiting for God. In our fast-paced world, waiting is generally seen as annoying, a passive time of enduring until life can resume. For the Psalmist, however, waiting is an active experience. This person waits in expectation that God's goodness will prevail.

We all suffer personal loss and tragedy at some time in our lives. We all know someone who is currently struggling with loss or disappointment. Our Lenten journey reminds us that, although we must often wait through the tragic and painful Good Fridays in our lives, we wait with the courage of Easter people. Think of a place in your own life that needs healing or restoration. Think of others you know that are experiencing tragedy or distress. Now spend some time in expectant waiting. Envision how God's goodness might bear on these situations. Perhaps you are called to do something for yourself or for another. If so, be strong and let your heart take courage.

*Your reflections. . .*

## *The Twentieth Day of Lent*

Thursday, March 11, 2010

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us."*

*– Hebrews 12:1*

Think of someone you have met on your Christian journey who you feel is courageous. How has this person displayed courage? What, in your opinion, has enabled them to act courageously? Give thanks to God for this person's life. Remember them throughout the day, and ask how your life might be blessed by their example.

*Your reflections. . .*

## *The Twenty-first Day of Lent*

Friday, March 12, 2010

*"There is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love, because he first loved us."*

*– 1John 4: 18-19*

The greatest obstacle to courage is fear. In 1John the antidote to fear is love. Having experienced God's love, we approach the world, not out of our uncertainty and fear, but grounded in the certain knowledge that we are loved and that we are capable of sharing that love with others. But love can seem vulnerable and weak up against our greatest fears. Ponder some difficult questions today. What are your greatest fears for yourself? For those you hold dear? In what ways is God's love stronger than your fear? In what ways do your fears persist? Where, in today's world, do you see evidence of love overcoming fear?

*Your reflections. . .*

## *The Twenty-second Day of Lent*

Saturday, March 13, 2010

Step outside your comfort zone today. Begin by reading Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Select one of Jesus' teachings that it is difficult for you to follow, and meditate upon it. What makes this teaching hard for you? In what ways would you have to change your life in order to take this teaching seriously? Can you think of ways that you might begin to incorporate this teaching into your life? Pray for the desire to act upon what you have discovered and the courage to follow through.

*Your reflections. . .*

## *The Fourth Sunday in Lent*

March 14, 2010

### **Celebrating the Spiritual Disciplines:** *Service*

As Christians, we choose to live as servants, opting to demonstrate our faith by helping, whoever is needy and whatever the need. Christ beckons us to a ministry of service that flows from a heart of humility and leads to a life filled with joy and peace.

In what ways are you living as a servant? Where will a life lived in service lead?

*This Lenten Season  
Create in me. . . Harmony  
Create in me. . . Purpose  
Create in me. . . Forgiveness  
Create in me . . . Courage  
And now bring me to Humility  
That I may seek God's will  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

*Your reflections...*