

## DAY TWENTY-NINE OF LENT

*“I pray that the Lord answers you whenever you are in trouble.  
Let the name of Jacob’s God protect you.”*

Psalm 20.1 CEB

In the midst of the lengthening Lenten discipline of reflection, repentance, prayer and re-dedication, have you thought outside the person which is you about the journey of others? Have you considered the lilies of the field, which neither sow, nor reap? Or perhaps about this Starry Champion, an Illinois Wildflower, found in abundance upon the grounds of DuBois Center?



Have you ever seriously pondered where the first one emerged? Who nurtures them? Who tends to them? Who causes their blooms to spring forth? How long it is they live? Why they come back each year? Do they have a purpose? How do they shape God’s Creation around them? What possible good might they offer to others?

The Starry Champion is pollinated by moths and, in lesser degree, by bumblebees. It reproduces by reseeding itself and is found throughout the prairie lands of Illinois . . . and it is a beautiful gift of God in the eye of the seeker. It is a host plant to a variety of insects and caterpillars and provides a deep root which holds the soil around it in place.

Now, ask the same questions of yourself that you might have directed to the Starry Champion: Where did you first emerge? Who nurtures you? Who tends to you? Who causes your blooms to spring forth? How long will you live? Why do you keep coming back? Do you have a purpose? How do you shape God’s Creation around you? What possible good might you offer to others?

As with the Starry Champion, only God knows all of the answers for any of us, yet now is the time to reckon our course, to consider our potential, to ponder the God who knows us and to follow in the way of the One whose root holds us all in our place. Now is the time to listen for God’s answers, not only in the times of trouble, but in the times of resplendent, dazzling beauty.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to listen more than I speak, to care more than I seek attention. Show me your Way and protect me in the Home of Your heart. Amen.

## DAY THIRTY OF LENT

*“Let God grant what is in your heart and fulfill all your plans.”*

Psalm 20.4 CEB

There is a very real problem with kneeling down in prayer and telling God your plans: God may have other plans for you. An old saying in ministry is, ‘If you want to hear God laugh, just tell God the plans you have for your life’, and, bottom line, it is true.



From the youngest of my years of recollection, all I ever wanted to do was be a farmer like my Dad. I grew up on my parent’s dairy farm, was one of four boys in our family who learned to feed calves, fork manure, milk cows, bale hay, stack straw, drive tractors in the fields, keep a careful accounting of production records for both the dairy and the crops, build sheds, construct waterways, work with neighbors and advocate on State and National levels for the agricultural industry. I loved it. Oh, some days were harder than others, there were some things about which my Dad or brother and I disagreed as to how to proceed in accomplishing, times were tight, money was scarce and not everyone around thought farming to be a glamorous or very profitable vocation, still, it was all I could ever imagine doing.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

**Prayer:** Lord God, please grant what is in my heart, even as You fulfill your plans in my life, as You continue to do in Jesus. Amen.

Then one evening, five years into the newly established farm partnership my Dad, older brother and I had formed and as I was entering herd records and balancing production lines in my basement office, I heard a voice, as clear as you speaking to me a couple of feet apart, “It is time.” Until several minutes later when that Voice

finished speaking, my knees were on the floor, the hair on the back of my neck stood on end, and there was no question in my heart and soul as to Who was speaking. I knew in an instant my life would never be the same, nor would the lives of my wife, young son and the rest of our family. God had changed my plans in an instant, calling me from the fields of Southern Illinois to the fields of ministry. ‘If you want to hear God laugh, just tell God the plans you have for your life.’

As God guided and fulfilled God’s plans in Jesus through faith and love, so God will fulfill the plans you have in your life . . . as long as you understand, God will be God – and you are God’s.

## DAY THIRTY-ONE OF LENT

*“Some people trust in chariots,  
others in horses;  
but we praise the  
Lord’s name.”*  
Psalm 20.7 CEB



For most kids and many adults, there is something fairly exciting about even the thought of going for a trail ride on one of the horses at DuBois Center, regardless the time of

year. Among the many of God’s gifts for which DuBois Center is steward, the small herd of horses stabled there are amazing. Friendly, strong, sure-footed, playful, loving and trustworthy, these horses provide their riders an opportunity to explore God’s creation from a whole new vantage point.

The gentle clumping of their hooves upon the trail as they walk, or the rhythmic feel of a trot through the trees, to even the adrenaline-rushing wonder of a gallop through a field gives to both horse and rider a sense of what distances can be accomplished, what goals can be met when human and animal work together. At best, it is a gift of the heavens, a sense of connectedness and a feeling of unity in creation. At worst, it is just another really good ride over the grounds of a beautiful setting.

I know of folk who would rather have a really good horse beside them or under them to share the journey of life (or just around camp) than a whole host of other people or things who would never appreciate the visions before them or the manner in which they arrived at their destination. As a good horse elevates its rider’s abilities, a good rider enhances a horse’s potential. It is a team-thing – and DuBois Center teaches it with great intentionality and care, mainly because such teamwork begins in praise of the Lord’s name.

You cannot do with humans and horses what you are unwilling to do, first, with God. Conversely, you cannot do with God that which you are unwilling to do, foremost, with the rest of creation. God is at the center of every wise and wonderful relationship, on earth as it is heaven, just as we pray it. You can have the most elaborate of chariots, whether Ford, Chevy, Toyota, Dodge or the host of others; You can have the most expensive and best bred of horses, whether Secretariat, Seabiscuit, Affirmed . . . or the horses of DuBois such as Apache, Cisco or Clover; but if God is not front and center, you may win the race, but you will lose the Victory. Just consider, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

**Prayer:** Let me live this and every day in praise of your Name, O Lord, in praise of your Name. Amen.

## DAY THIRTY-TWO OF LENT

*“Have mercy on me, Lord, because I’m depressed.  
My vision fails because of my grief, as do my spirit and my body.”*

Psalm 31.9 CEB

Lord, I am at the point in Lent that all of this ‘discipline’ stuff is getting old. There is a part of me which is ready to climb up in a tree like Zacchaeus did to see you along the road – and there is a part of me which just wants to blend in, become invisible, disappear and become forgotten. Looking at You, Jesus, reminds me just how far I am from the vision of the Kingdom You lived each day of your ministry – and hearing Your teaching reminds me just how far I have come and makes me yearn for more of You.



On the one hand, I am elated to be with You and, on the other hand, I cannot stand how the world – and my choices along the way – make me appear in Your eyes. Still, You love me. Still, You heal me. Still, You call me down from my perches above your travels, even as You call me out of my hideaways, my invisible places and my darkened despair to meet You in Love, face-to-Face.

Quiet me, Lord, to hear your Voice.

Open my eyes, Lord, to see You summoning me to You.

Restore my heart in You, Lord, that Hope would be my constant companion on the way.

Soften my soul, Lord, to believe the Gift of mercy and grace You are.

Finally, quicken my steps, Lord, which take me to Your side wherever that may be.

Remind me that as You near Jerusalem, You near all the pain, depression, despair, hopelessness, timidity and restlessness in me – and that it is for such as me that You continue your journey. You are, that I might know Life. I am, that You might Live in me.

Such a blessing is beyond my capacity to understand, so I simply, profoundly say, Thank You, Lord Jesus. Thank You.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

**Prayer:** Lord, You have never given up on me, so don’t let me give up on myself. Fill me, use me, guide me guard me, that each of my days would be spent in your Presence, now and forever. Amen.

DAY THIRTY-THREE  
OF LENT

*“But me?  
I trust you, Lord!  
I affirm, “You are my God.””*  
Psalm 31.14 CEB



Winter brings snow and cold, Spring arrives with lush grasses and emerging crocus, Summer’s heat and long dog days reflect the nearness of the sun, then Fall’s emerging colors and crisp evenings gather our journey in the nearing night of earth’s renewal. Who, other than God, can stack the flowers on end or cause the bullfrogs to echo across the pond? Who, other than God, can pillow the sky with clouds or soften the morning with hushing fog and nurturing dew? Who, other than God, can dry the hay in the field or cause the

corn to grow? Who, other than God, gives direction to migrating geese or shows the doe the best place to birth a fawn? Who, other than God, guides the squirrel to the stash of nuts or give the chicken hawk its watchful eye? Who, other than God, can guide the path of the botanist exploring the woods or beckon home the child whose way has been lost? Who, other than God, can break the bonds of slavery or bring refreshing water from a rock? Who, other than God, can cause a lake to blossom in July with the flowers of the lily pad or make the sound of a leaping bass echo across the land?

Who, other than God, causes the Psalmist to cry out, “You are my God” or the centurion to kneel in awe and witness to the Son of God?

Who, other than God, causes the wind to blow and flames to leap in Pentecost power or can place scales upon a man’s eyes until he is ready to see with the Vision of faith?

Who, other than God, knows you as a child of God and loves you just as you are or is willing to go to the ends of the earth for your sake, regardless the price?

The world is full of questions, doubts, allegations, presumption and cynicism, but only God can give the final answers, as simply as in the stacking of blooms.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

**Prayer:** O, Holy One, give me the patience to wait on Your answers, the heart to consider their meaning and the soul to allow belief to transform my days. Amen.

## DAY THIRTY-FOUR OF LENT

*“My future is in your hands. Don’t hand me over to my enemies, to all who are out to get me!”*

Psalm 31.15 CEB



The shadow of Jerusalem looms near, yet outside the walls, somewhere along the paths, prayer is lifted to God as lightly as a Monarch butterfly descends upon a branch. Imperceptibly both limb and leaf bow ever so slightly as feet find their place, first holding on, then tasting the goodness the host has to offer.

Prayers, bold and distinctive as Monarch colors, whose supplications rise above the dusty road being followed, ascend to the Holy One on the eve of what is to come. Only Jesus knows. Only Jesus understands. Only Jesus can name that which is yet to be revealed.

“My future is in your hands” is more a witness than a confession. To trust God deeply enough to be rested in the thought that what is before you is not of your own design, yet is that towards which you must go bespeaks the awesome and awful nature of being Christ. Still, there it is, the prayer rising to the Heavens above from the earth beneath, “Don’t hand me over to my enemies, to all who are out to get me!”

There is no known connection between the words of the Psalmist as they were written and the journey of Jesus as He moves towards Jerusalem, still they intertwine, still they mirror the other, still they reveal a dark premonition. ‘Migrate away, Jesus!’ ‘Flutter your wings or call upon the angels and do not dash Your foot upon the stones of our hatred, prejudice and bigotry, Lord!’ ‘Listen to Your own prayers and turn away, for Your sake and for those whom You have already saved!’

Motionless He stands on the road, sighing a prayer, resting in the moment, looking at those around Him, wondering if they will be able to drink the cup they so desire, to fulfill their calling to which they have been called. Then, as though by the breath of the Spirit, He moves on, the Monarch releases its hold on the limb, the prayer spoken, the prayer answered and, in a twinkling, the shadows around Jerusalem give way to a stark clarity none but He can perceive. Stay with Him, if you can.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

**Prayer:** Lord, when my feet will not move forward out of fear, cause my soul to lead on anyway because of faith and trust in You. Amen.

## SIXTH SUNDAY OF LENT - PALM SUNDAY

*“Shine your face on your servant; save me by your faithful love!”*

Psalm 31.16 CEB

*“Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout.’”*

Luke 19.39-40 CEB



There is arrogance among the humans of creation, as though they are the only ones with voices to praise or the good sense to be silent. Haughtiness consumes them, conceit controls them and ego directs them. ‘Do as I say!’ ‘Do it now!’ ‘Do it my way!’ ‘Only I/we can be correct!’ ‘You should listen!’

Their folly continues to sound in every generation and they know not the Judgment coming upon them. The foolishness of believing their language, even perfect interpretation, carries the day before God causes to the stars to giggle.

Have you ever listened to the sound of waves upon the shore? Considered the thunderstorms through the mountains and valleys? Tended to the singing of the cricket? Were stopped in your tracks by the magnificent silence of a sunset? Pondered at the wisdom of a hoot owl on a darkened night? Or took into account the language of palms as they are laid in processional tribute?

God’s Voice will not be silenced and those who wait for Salvation will not be turned away. How loud must have been the Red Sea when its’ waters were turned loose upon the pursuing Egyptians? How deafening must have been the falling of Jericho’s walls when God’s trumpets of triumph and marching feet of victory surrounded that self-serving city? How loud were the wailing cries of those led into exile after forgetting their birthright and abdicating their identity of being God’s people called to care for the least among them?

God’s Voice will not be silenced and those who wait for Salvation will not be turned away. On this day we are invited to join with Creation in loud ‘Hosannas!’ as we welcome the Son of the Living God into the city of our existence. Such a Savior, God’s own Chosen, arrives as He will, loves as He can, heals where He is welcomed and restores Life in a place where the rock and stones themselves are the first to sing, ‘Alleluia!’ Listen for the Song, sing with Creation, be at Peace. He comes!

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

**Prayer:** O Holy One, ride into my heart and silence my mindless droning. Give me your Song to sing on this journey of faith. Amen.