

Lenten Series 2022: Sojourning
Revised Common Lectionary Year C

Suggestions for the theme: maps, atlases, compasses, etc. See each entry for ideas for altar space, for social media graphics, or other use.

Lent 1: Luke 4:1-13 Preparing for the Journey

What do you need to prepare for a journey? Perhaps a backpack, a bottle of water, a map, a guidebook etc.

The third temptation in Luke's account was for Jesus to throw himself off the pinnacle of the tower of the temple in Jerusalem. This last temptation is to rush everything—to miss all the ministry, all the healing and preaching and breaking bread together—and go right to the end. To go right to his death and resurrection, because Jesus knows the promise of God. It's the journey, not the destination. Too often as Christians we have focused on getting into heaven, and not life here on earth. Jesus calls us into repentance and forgiveness here. Jesus calls us into the work of justice and mercy here and now. Jesus calls us to live in the messiness of this life and live for the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus' time in the wilderness prepares him for his ministry and prepares us for Christ's way of life.

Lent 2: Luke 13:31-35 Roadblocks

What would slow you down on a journey? A rocky road, a washed-out path, a storm. Sometimes caution signs are important to heed, but we still move forward, knowing God is with us.

Jesus knew he needed to go to Jerusalem, despite Herod and a history of corrupt leadership. This passage is also a good reminder that not all Pharisees opposed Jesus, and that Jesus probably had the most in common with the Pharisees. Jesus longed to gather the people together as a hen gathers her chicks, but throughout the scriptures, people continued to ignore the prophets when challenged. Jesus sees the roadblocks, and knows that despite what will happen, he must continue forward.

Lent 3: Luke 13:1-9 Road Signs

What signs direct you on your journey? Where do you see the detours, the switchbacks, the tunnels? How do you move forward?

Jesus is told about a massacre of Galileans by Pilate. Though Pilate is portrayed as not wanting to kill Jesus in the Gospels, he was the Roman governor and the force of the emperor over the Judeans, and the beginning of this passage is a reminder of the empire's violence. Jesus speaks of this and another disaster to show that death is not a punishment for sin, that victims should not be blamed for what happens to them. Instead, Jesus is teaching that unless we repent and turn back, our lives lead to dead ends. The story of the fig tree that grew for three years but bore no fruit is

a reminder that our lives can become stagnant and the ways of this world—wealth, worldly measures of success and notoriety—lead to dead ends. Repentance calls us to turn back to God’s way. The gardener saves the fig tree from destruction with the hope that a little tender care will turn it into a fruit-bearing tree. Jesus cares for us and teaches us that with love and care we may turn our lives around.

Lent 4: Luke 15:1-32 Getting Lost

Have you ever been lost? What can help you find your way back? Have you ever used a compass, or landmarks to help you find your way?

The Revised Common Lectionary only uses the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but I’ve included the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin as a reminder that the story is not just about the one who repents and turns back, but also about searching for the lost and for the lost searching for their way. Though the coin can only be found by the woman searching for it, the sheep could have been trying to find its way back as well. While we often assume it is God searching for us and waiting for us to come back, we are also searching to find our way when the ways of the world lead us astray. It could be similar to the temptations the son faced, or the systems of the world that support privilege and power of some over others that lead us astray, or simply that we have found ourselves alone when we didn’t intend to be, like the sheep.

Lent 5: John 12:1-8 Soothing Sore Spots

Have you ever had a blister? A flat tire? Something that required you to stop for a while and take care of a need? Have you ever stopped to help someone else on the way? What do you need? Perhaps a first aid kit, or a patch for your tire.

Jesus stops at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In John’s account, it is Mary who anoints Jesus before he enters Jerusalem, with perfume she bought to anoint him for his burial. Others thought this was a waste, but Jesus saw it was important. It was important that Mary be allowed to show him kindness and compassion before he went on the last part of his journey to Jerusalem and his death. What are the signs we need to stop, show kindness and compassion to others and to ourselves? Mary knew how precious life is, having lost her brother Lazarus before, and even though Lazarus was raised from the dead, she knew that death was still difficult to face. She took time to care for Jesus while he was with her. It is important for us to care for our relationship with God and with one another now. It is important to be tender with one another.

Palm Sunday: Luke 19:28-40 The End is the Beginning

Sometimes we think we’re at the end of the trail, but there’s another trailhead. Sometimes there is a crossroads. Sometimes we arrive at one destination, and need to enter an address for the next one. Sometimes we think we’ve come to the end of the road, but there’s another road to go. Cairns are stacks of stones making a landmark, used since ancient times, and can mark when a new trail is beginning.

Luke's account for Palm Sunday reminds me of his birth. The people shout, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven," like the angels sang down to the shepherds, "Peace on earth, and goodwill to all." It's another time when heaven and earth draw near, and when some of the religious leaders, probably worried about Herod and Pilate tell Jesus to order his disciples to be quiet, he tells them that the stones would shout out. There are signs everywhere, even when we try to ignore them, that heaven and earth have drawn near. Death will not be the final destination. There is more to come.