



LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES  
*People Of Christ With The Message Of Hope*

# GivenForUs



Lenten Devotions 2009

It is our heartfelt joy to provide you with *Given For Us*, devotions of reflection and meditation for the 2009 Lenten season. At this time of the year, when our hearts are directed to the limitless expression of God's love as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, it is our hope you find these words both thoughtful and inspirational.

As with LHM's Advent devotions of last year, these Lenten words have been written by graduating students from the 2008 class of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Each pastor is now in his first church—an event that is both momentous and rewarding in any pastor's life. We at Lutheran Hour Ministries express our deep thanks to these servants of God and to Concordia Seminary for providing us both the messengers and the messages during this awe-inspiring season.

It is Christ's unimaginable passion on the cross at Golgotha that gives the world a second chance. Blood—God's holy blood of forgiveness—was poured out for us that day two thousand years ago, and it still transforms lives today. May these devotions lead you to that place where God has made a bridge for us to return from exile: the cross of Jesus Christ.

Wednesday February 25th Ash Wednesday

## “Washed”

TEXT: Psalm 51:10a - Create in me a clean heart, O God.


One of my responsibilities in our home is to wash the dishes. Yet, to be honest, there are times when I miss a few spots. I get into surface-cleaning mode, scrubbing only the spots I can see and quickly wipe away. And too often the stains remain. My wife has to repeatedly remind me to slow down and do a “thorough cleaning.” Experience has taught me that washing dishes properly involves time. The edge and bottom of a dish must be carefully inspected. The soap has to soak into the areas that have become plastered with chunks of food. And, the scrubber must scrape away any remaining pieces.

How often in our spiritual lives are we content to do a surface cleaning? We do a quick outward cleaning, but inside our lives are a mess. Jesus said to the religious leaders in Matthew 23:25b, “For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.” Aren’t we the same way? We put on a good façade, pretending that we have our lives together. Yet, inside our lives are torn apart by dirty little secrets and sinful habits. The stain of sin remains.

Ash Wednesday gives us an opportunity to slow down and experience the thorough cleaning that comes from Jesus’ death on the cross. Take a moment to carefully inspect your own life. Examine the dark corners. Take a tour of the places that have been corroded by your self-centered ways. Maybe you’re still holding a grudge. Maybe you’re constantly worrying about life. Perhaps it’s a problem with pride or greed or fear. Don’t rush through this experience. Yes, you’ll discover things you don’t want to see. Yet, when you do, let the words of David’s prayer flow from your lips: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” Allow God to thoroughly clean your spiritual dishes! Let Him reach in and scrub clean the parts of your life that have become plastered by chunks of sin. He won’t miss a spot! 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, reach into my life and cleanse me from every area where I have slipped away from You. Grant me the forgiveness that flows from the cross of Christ. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Written by Pastor Josh Bernau  
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During Lent, we are reminded of an event that was carried out completely on our behalf. It was painful beyond all imaginings; it was monstrous beyond all violence. It was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ of Nazareth on a hill outside the city of Jerusalem. And with that ordeal, God's plan of salvation—as incomprehensible as it was to the human mind—was heading to completion when three days later He raised His Son from the dead.

This Lenten season, first-call pastors from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis share their thoughts about this season and its implications for a corrupt mankind. Now installed in their first churches, these pastors know well the timeless significance of Christ's passion and what His obedience "to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8b) means for each of us.

As you read these devotions during this most solemn season in the Church Year, may you find again through God's Holy Spirit how true love has conquered all for each of us.



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