

# 2021 Lenten Devotional

## A Season of Contemplation and Invitation

FEBRUARY 17 - MARCH 27

The  
GAME  
of

LIFE

Forgive a  
neighbor for  
trespassing.

LIFE



Commit to baptism  
date for baby!

LIFE

Thank small  
group for praying  
for healing.



COMMUNITY  
- of GRACE -

LUTHERAN CHURCH

4000 Linden Street | White Bear Lake, MN | 55110  
gracepeople.church 651.429.5349

# Lent: The Game of Life

Lent is a season of contemplation and invitation. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness as he prepared for his earthly ministry and, each year, he invites us to join him on a 40-day journey where we bear witness to his life in anticipation of his death and resurrection. It is the same invitation Jesus gave to his first disciples when he asked them to follow him.



darrin@gracepeople.church

This year, the journey will feel different. We won't gather together in person each Wednesday to share a meal and participate in congregational worship. But we will follow Jesus, nonetheless.

It is my prayer that these daily devotions will help you to remain united and connected as a community of grace during these challenging times. May you experience an intimacy with Jesus as you encounter him in the scriptures. May you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit as you contemplate his power at work within you. And may you know the deep love of your Heavenly Father as he reveals himself to you in Christ.

By Grace Alone,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrin G. Vick".

Senior Pastor Darrin Vick

## Ash Wednesday Services

11 a.m. In-Person Worship Only  
Traditional Communion Service & Imposition of Ashes

11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Drive-Thru  
Communion & Imposition of Ashes

6:30 p.m. In-Person Worship Livestreamed at [gracepeople.live](https://gracepeople.live)  
Traditional Communion Service & Imposition of Ashes

7:15-8 p.m. Drive-Thru  
Communion & Imposition of Ashes

# Daily Devotions

by Pastor Angie Way



angie@gracepeople.church

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17: (ASH WEDNESDAY)

**Readings:** Joel 2:12-17; Psalm 51; Matthew 5:17-20

### Commit to the Journey:

*Today begins the 40-day journey to the cross (not counting Sunday/Sabbaths). As we recognize our sin and our need for God's grace, we are marked by ashes - a reminder of death, in the shape of the cross. Even as we're marked with the ashes of our sin, we remember there is one who took the penalty for us through the cross. What Jesus did for us was a **game changer!** Where we had no destination but death, Jesus became for us the way to life. In these 40 days, commit to studying and receiving from the Lord what it looks like to engage life, not by the rules of the broken world, but in the Jesus way!*

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18:

**Reading:** Matthew 22:35-40

### Response:

Jesus says the second commandment is *like* the first. How are they alike? How are they connected? What do you think Jesus is saying when he says all the law and prophets *hang* on these two? Find a way to intentionally live into both of these, today!



## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19:

**Reading:** Matthew 19:16-26

### Response:

Two things we learn from this: First, the ten commandments reflect what God wants for us - a godly, trustworthy world. Second, it is impossible for us to follow them perfectly! Jesus' answer to the response, "Who then can be saved" takes us aback - until we realize that's why HE came. Confess to Jesus, today, ways you have not lived his good heart for the world and ask Jesus to do for you what only he can do; forgive, renew, and save.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20:

**Readings:** Romans 8:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

### Response:

Today's verses answer Jesus' statement yesterday: showing what is possible with God! As

we receive his saving work for us (reconciled by Christ) we are also called to a ministry of helping others be reconciled to God. How might Jesus' call for us to love God and love your neighbor impact how we engage this ministry? Why is this important to our witness to who God is?

## THE GAME OF LIFE - LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

The Fourth Commandment: *Honor your father and your mother.*

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21:

*God wants us to have a trustworthy framework in which to live our lives in freedom and love. The first three commandments have to do with loving God: You shall have no other gods, You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, and Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. When we trust the Lord as creator and judge over all of life, we show our trust in him by living within the basic framework of the 'rules of play' God lays out for human community. Jesus sums up this section of God's law with the words: "Love your neighbor as yourself," and as in any game, he shows us our starting point is **home!***

Honor your father and your mother.

Martin Luther says, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and others in authority, but respect, obey, love and serve them."

#### Response:

Luther expands this command to include not just parents, but all in authority. Do you react differently when imagining each? What does that tell you?

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22:

**Reading:** Deuteronomy 5:16

#### Response:

In the ancient world often only males were addressed. Why do you think in God's command he includes both father and mother? How do you think the blessings listed are connected to this command?

### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23:

**Reading:** Matthew 15:1-9

#### Response:

Dedicated gifts to God's mission on earth are good things. What is Jesus showing us about what God considers key in our role in that mission?



### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24:

**Reading:** 1 Samuel 22:1-4

#### Response:

David feared his actions may impact his family, so he took action on their behalf. How do your actions today impact those closest to you? How can you take action to care for them?

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25:

**Readings:** Psalm 27:10; Isaiah 49:14-16

**Response:**

Not all earthly parents have earned respect or love by their actions. This call to show respect and love in our actions is a response to God's commitment to love us as a heavenly parent. How is God honored when we intentionally choose to love the unlovely?

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26:**

**Reading:** Proverbs 1:8-9

**Response:**

What have you learned from your parents that you value today? What do you think God is teaching us about learning to love our neighbor in this commandment of the ten?

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27:**

**Reading:** John 19:26-27

**Response:**

There came a time when Jesus knew he could no longer care for his mother in the earthly way she needed. What does Jesus' action show us about what love can look like when care needed by a parent is beyond our ability?

## **THE GAME OF LIFE - LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR** **The Fifth Commandment: *You shall not kill (murder).***

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28:**

*Often when people play games together things can get intense and go from being competitive to bloodthirsty! Sometimes actions only meant to be part of the play can create hurts and rifts even beyond the game. God's rules for the game of life remind us what's most important to him is not whether you win or lose in life (in your own eyes), but how your actions impact the wellbeing of your fellow players.*

You shall not kill (murder).

Martin Luther says, "We are called to fear and love God so that we do not hurt our neighbor in any way but help him in all his physical needs."

**Reading:** Matthew 7:12

**Response:**

Jesus' Golden Rule calls us to do to others as we would have them do to us. Jesus shows God's intention isn't just that we don't kill each other, but that we actually commit to do no harm (as in the doctor's oath). Beyond that, we are called to do what we can to keep our neighbor alive! How do you experience this command, when you read it "do no harm?" Does that cause a different response and confession in your heart?

**MONDAY, MARCH 1:**

**Reading:** Exodus 20:13

**Response:**

Although most often when we refer to this commandment we use the word *kill*, the closest translation in the Hebrew is *murder*. What is different in the connotations of that word for you? What is God saying to you in this today?

## TUESDAY, MARCH 2:

**Reading:** Matthew 5:21-24

**Response:**

The action of murder begins in what you entertain in your heart and what you say with your lips. As you hear Jesus' teaching on this commandment, is there a confession you need to make, or anyone you need to approach for reconciliation?

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3:

**Reading:** Matthew 5:38-48

**Response:**

How does one help an evil person change? Jesus' way is not the obvious one! Who is God calling you to shock with undeserved love?

## THURSDAY, MARCH 4:

**Readings:** Matthew 15:17-20; 2 Corinthians 10:5

**Response:**

Every action that kills or destroys starts as a thought entertained in the heart. We can't control what pops into our heads, but we can choose which thoughts to entertain and which to take captive and submit to Christ. Picture taking a thought you don't want to entertain and handing it to Jesus. Practice and repeat!

## FRIDAY, MARCH 5:

**Reading:** Romans 13:8-10

**Response:**

Love does no harm. What is the Lord saying to you today through this scripture?

## SATURDAY, MARCH 6:

**Reading:** Leviticus 19:16-18

**Response:**

This list contains a host of ways that 'murderous' thoughts grow in us if we let them. As you read this list, let the Lord bring to mind hurts of when these have been done to you. Ask the Lord to help you let go of your hurt or hate through forgiveness, so your heart can be set free.

## THE GAME OF LIFE - LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

**The Sixth Commandment: *You shall not commit adultery.***



## The Seventh Commandment: *You shall not steal.*

### SUNDAY, MARCH 7:

*Nobody likes a cheater. Those who throw out the rules so they can get what they want for themselves never do so without hurting others. Whether stealing is relational or material, these actions leave devastation in their wake. God lays down these rules because he wants us to have a trustworthy world, where we respect one another's relationships and one another's possessions.*

You shall not commit adultery.

Martin Luther says, "We are to fear and love God so that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable, and husband and wife love and respect each other."

You shall not steal.

Martin Luther says, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or property, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of making a living."

### Response:

The choice to honor and safeguard what belongs to another is the heart of integrity and respect. What is the Lord showing you today in how you are called to live these commandments well?

### MONDAY, MARCH 8:

**Reading:** Exodus 20:13-14

### Response:

What do the sixth and seventh commandment have in common? Why do you think people choose to violate them? Bring to the Lord anything on your heart these responses bring to the surface for you.

### TUESDAY, MARCH 9:

**Reading:** Proverbs 6:23-33

### Response:

This passage presents adultery as unwise, not only for society, but also for the person. Pray for those who are tempted in this way. Pray for a marriage relationship significant to your life, that it may be loving, respectful, protected, and blessed.

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10:

**Reading:** Matthew 5:27-30; John 8:3-11

### Response:

Jesus didn't mean for us to take Matthew's words literally. *None of his disciples gouged out their eyes!* Still, Jesus' words tell how serious we should take this: *better to lose an eye.* Yet in John, we see Jesus' tender grace for a woman caught in adultery. Sin hurts people. Jesus loves people. What does it look like for you to take sin seriously, while also loving people like Jesus did?

### THURSDAY, MARCH 11:



**Readings:** Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14-16

**Response:**

Both these scriptures about stealing come from the angle of keeping from others what is rightfully theirs. What is at the heart of this kind of stealing? What would you say is the call 'to do' in these scriptures?

**FRIDAY, MARCH 12:**

**Reading:** Ephesians 4:28

**Response:**

What does this scripture reveal about the need for purpose in our lives? In giving us the command, "Do not steal," what do you think God is showing us of the life he wants for us instead?



**SATURDAY, MARCH 13:**

**Reading:** John 10:10

**Response:**

Why do you think stealing is one of the marks of the enemy of our souls? When we work to protect what others have, what message does that send to the world about Jesus? As an act of love, Jesus might be calling you to help someone *get back* something that was *stolen* from them.

## **THE GAME OF LIFE - LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR**

**The Eighth Commandment: *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.***

**SUNDAY, MARCH 14:**

*When you're playing a game, often part of the strategy to win is to bluff or con your fellow players so you can get ahead. It may also include convincing other players not to trust a fellow player in order to throw suspicion off yourself. In game play and often in our world, this kind of behavior is rewarded as cunning or clever. In the game of life, however, according to God's rules - this is strictly out-of-bounds behavior. The winning choice by the Lord's rules is in guarding the reputation of others.*

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  
Martin Luther says, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way."

**Response:**

When you don't understand the actions of another, do you offer the benefit of the doubt rather than assuming the worst? Do you explain their actions in the kindest way? Why do you think God commands this? What kind of people/society does this kind of practice create? How does Jesus' golden rule play into this command?

**MONDAY, MARCH 15:**



**Reading:** Leviticus 19:11

**Response:**

This verse reads like game instructions! In this simplistic form, the instructions seem easy to carry out. What makes them complicated for us in real life? Why do you think we need to be reminded of these common sense rules?

**TUESDAY, MARCH 16:**

**Reading:** Ephesians 4:29-32

**Response:**

Why do you think our unwholesome talk, slander, malice and bitterness toward each other grieves the Holy Spirit? What does God want for us as a community? Why? What is the Lord saying to you today?

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17 (ST. PATRICK'S DAY):**

**Readings:** Proverbs 24:28-29; Romans 12:17-21

**Response:**

St. Patrick was called to share the Gospel in Ireland where he had once been enslaved. Through Jesus' call to love his enemies, Patrick's ministry changed a nation! There is a temptation when we are hurt to hurt in return. This is not Jesus' way. When we choose not to slander, but to safeguard another's reputation, we show whose we are. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to love an *enemy*.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 18:**

**Readings:** Psalm 12; Psalm 15

**Response:**

For David, people's lies (especially about himself) were one of his biggest frustrations. This made him careful never to slander the king, even though the king was trying to kill him. What do you learn about David's relationship with God through these psalms? What kind of world does God want for us?



**FRIDAY, MARCH 19:**

**Readings:** Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 24:23-26

**Response:**

On the flipside of not bearing false witness is the responsibility to offer faithful witness even when it is hard. A call not to slander cannot be an excuse not to speak up when we see a wrong being done. How do these verses speak to God's character, and the role he calls us to play in loving our neighbor faithfully?

**SATURDAY, MARCH 20:**

**Readings:** Matt 26:59-66; Matt 22:16; John 3:21

**Response:**

Jesus was the target of many false witnesses. Yet, even to save his life, Jesus would not deny what was true. What does it mean for you today to be a person of integrity, not swayed by earthly powers? What worldly self-serving 'truths' might we be tempted to stand on, rather than the truth God reveals in the words and actions of Jesus?

## THE GAME OF LIFE - LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

**The Ninth Commandment:** *You shall not covet your neighbor's house.*

**The Tenth Commandment:** *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or his maidservant, or his cattle or anything that is your neighbor's.*

### SUNDAY, MARCH 21:

*The winner takes all! It's the driving force of most games. We want what others have and by the end of the game, if we play our cards right, it will be ours! It's strange how the powerful forces of selfishness, greed, and coveting seem to be at the center of so many of our games! Yet, God's rules of play have a different goal. If at the end of the game you've successfully helped your neighbor keep all they have worked for, you've won! What a world it would be if we all played the game of life God's way!*

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

Martin Luther says, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not desire to get our neighbor's possessions by scheming, or by pretending to have a right to them, but always help him keep what is his."

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Martin Luther says, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not tempt or coax away from our neighbor his wife or his workers, but encourage them to remain loyal."

**Readings:** Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21 (NIV)

### Response:

What is the same, and what is different in these two versions of the commandments? In the NIV translation, Deuteronomy says, "you shall not set your desire on..." Are you aware of where your desires have been set? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your desires are in need of a holy reset today.

### MONDAY, MARCH 22:

**Readings:** Genesis 3:6; Genesis 4:3-7

### Response:

What did Eve covet and what did Cain covet in each of these stories? How do God's words to Cain in verse seven apply to the covetous areas of your heart? What are the traps God is trying to help you avoid in these commands about coveting?

### TUESDAY, MARCH 23:

**Reading:** James 3:14-4:10

### Response:

Coveting leads us to desire to take something away from others. James boldly asks, rather than seeing your neighbor as the one who has what you want, have you asked God about what you desire? Ask God today to show you the true desires of your heart, and ask him to meet you in making them one with his.

### **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24:**

**Readings:** Galatians 6:4-10; 1 John 2:17

**Response:**

Comparison is food for a covetous heart. What draws you into the trap of comparing yourself to others? What does God want for you instead?

### **THURSDAY, MARCH 25:**

**Readings:** Psalm 73; Psalm 37

**Response:**

These psalms openly name the spiritual havoc envy and coveting create in our souls. What is the Lord saying to you today about your own struggles through these ancient confessional prayers?



### **FRIDAY, MARCH 26:**

**Reading:** Luke 12:13-34

**Response:**

Here Jesus tells a parable about the futility of greed, and then reminds us where true riches are found. What is Jesus telling us the longing of our hearts is to be? If our coveting leads to our action, it's important to know what our hearts treasure most. Ask the Lord today to show you what that is for you, and to align your heart's longing to his.

### **SATURDAY, MARCH 27:**

**Readings:** Philippians 4:4-13

**Response:**

What helps you to turn from coveting to contentment? Write out a list of things for which you are thankful. Then, ask the Lord to help you grow in the grace of contentment as you treasure the gifts he gives.

*Devotional materials for the remainder of Lent (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday) can be found in the Holy Week booklet to be mailed in late March. Please contact the church office at 651-429-5349, if you have not received yours by Monday, March 22.*

# Next Steps at CGLC

## **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13**

*Online Ignatian Prayer Retreat: Loving God. Loving Neighbors.*

**9 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ZOOM EVENT**

## **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17**

*Ash Wednesday Services*

**11 A.M. IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY**

*Traditional Communion Service & Imposition of Ashes*

**11:45 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. DRIVE-THRU**

*Communion & Imposition of Ashes*

**6:30 P.M. IN-PERSON WORSHIP**

*Traditional Communion Service & Imposition of Ashes*

*Livestreamed at [gracepeople.live](https://www.gracepeople.live)*

**7:15 - 8 P.M. DRIVE-THRU**

*Communion & Imposition of Ashes*

## **WEDNESDAYS, FEBRUARY 24 - MARCH 24**

*Online-Only Lenten Wednesday Services*

**6:30 P.M. FACEBOOK LIVE EVENT**

*Each Wednesday will include worship music, interactive prayer, and a discussion of the week's commandment(s) and how Jesus works through the law in our lives.*

*Access at: <https://www.facebook.com/gracepeoplemn/live>*

*A Facebook account is NOT required to watch, though it is necessary if you want to request prayer or join the discussion with the pastors.*

*Watch for Holy Week details in an upcoming mailing from the church and the Senior Newsletter.*

4000 Linden Street  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110  
[gracepeople.church](https://www.gracepeople.church)  
651.429.5349

Regular Sunday Worship  
at 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.  
In person and online live or later at:  
[gracepeople.live](https://www.gracepeople.live)