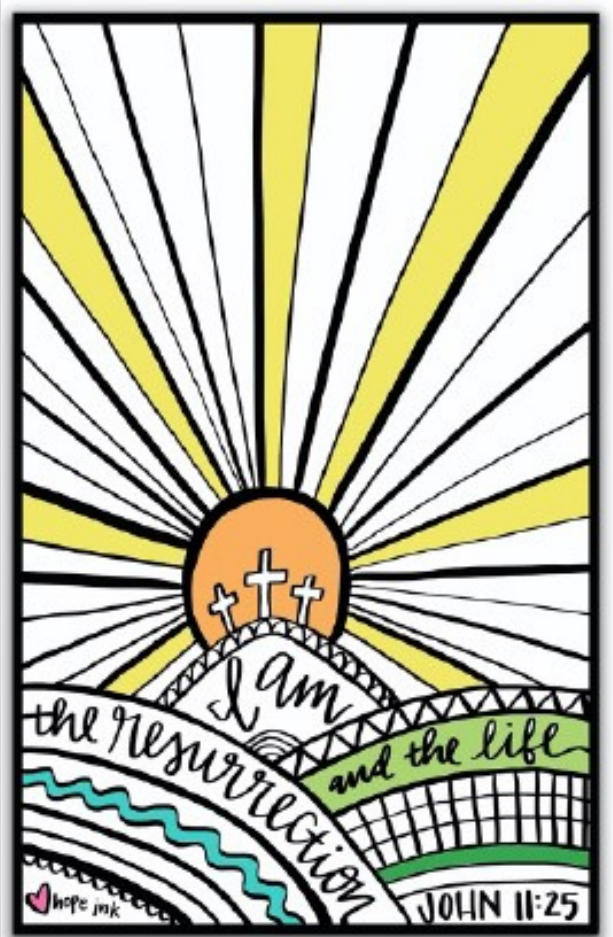


**Pastor Nathan Johnson  
is inviting you to join the  
Tabernacle MBC Family  
in a  
2021 Lenten Devotion  
“Arising Son”**



*“Arising Son”*  
*2021 Lenten Devotional*



Jesus said to her,  
“I am the resurrection and the life. Those  
who believe in me, even though they die,  
will live...”

~ John 11:25

## Week One: Transfigurations



*February 17-20*

*Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021*

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 32:24, 28-30

Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

**REFLECTION:** I think of "Israel" as Jacob's "superhero" name. It comes with an origin story. It reveals something about both the hero's character and his journey. Maybe most important of all, it looks cool on the cover of a comic book. Watch out, world; here comes the God-Wrestler!

And keep in mind, that cool name (Superman, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man) is not the character's "secret identity," it's their *public* identity. Clark Kent, Diana Prince and Peter Parker are the secret, private names of these extraordinary individuals, the masks they wear when they pretend to be ordinary and try to "blend in." They might keep those masks on for extended periods, while they go to work, make dinner and brush their teeth, but the meat of the story happens when they shed their street clothes, wrapping themselves in colorful costumes to right wrongs, fight for justice and save the world.

Israel, the one who struggles through sleepless nights trying to get his arms around God, is the extraordinary public truth of some seemingly nondescript guy named Jacob Isaacson. To be sure, the hero's true identity is never far below the surface, even in their street clothes. Clark Kent exposes corruption as an investigative reporter. Peter Parker volunteers in soup kitchens.

Typically, the hero only becomes aware of this true identity through some unexpected drama or even trauma. Peter Parker didn't go looking to be bitten by a spider and have his DNA scrambled. Neither was Jacob looking for a wrestling match with God, and he certainly didn't plan to walk with a limp for the rest of his life. While their minds were on one thing -- Peter's high school tribulations, Jacob's conflict with his brother — something else entirely came out of the blue and revealed the course of their life. (They didn't even get to choose their own new names; "Spider-Man" got his from an amateur wrestling promoter and "Israel" received his instead of learning God's name, as he had demanded.)

So I wonder, when will we experience our own extraordinary origin stories and learn our own true, wrong-righting, justice-seeking, world-changing names? Who are we really?

**PRAYER:** *Abba and teacher, surprise us with the truth of ourselves, and commit our hearts to serving your world and your people with the courage of the name you have given us: Beloved Child made in your image. Amen.*

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*Thursday, February 18, 2021*

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Kings 19:11-12

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

**REFLECTION:** The dictionary describes transfiguration as “a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state.” Non-believers make the statement that they cannot believe in something or someone that they cannot see. Yet as Lutherans we believe in Jesus Christ even though we can't physically see Him and look forward to seeing Christ when He returns.

Peter, James & John were to stay awake guarding Jesus, but they fell asleep. They awoke to see Christ's glory and Moses & Elijah standing with Him. Moses and Elijah represent the two principal components of the Old Testament: Moses was the giver of the law, and Elijah was considered the greatest of the prophets. God allowed the apostles to have a spiritual experience that was meant to strengthen their faith for the challenges they would later endure as Jesus has to suffer through the Passion.

In the same way, at certain times in this life, God may give certain members of the faithful, special experiences of His grace that strengthen their faith. Not everyone will have such an experience, but we should welcome these experiences, but not expect them, or be afraid of them.

They are meant to be momentary glimpses of the joy of heaven that should sustain us as we face various challenges of this life, and to help strengthen us on the road that will ultimately bring us into the endless joy of heaven. This is the future experience we pray for!

**PRAYER:** *Lord, we are weak and don't fully understand all that will happen before we meet you in our heavenly home. Please forgive our ignorance and lack of faith. Send your Holy Spirit to make us stronger and to build our faith so that we reach out and spread Your Word to our fellowman. Help us live our lives more like Christ, helping others, loving our neighbor and bringing them into the fold. Amen.*

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*Friday, February 19, 2021*

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 8:43-48

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me." When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

**REFLECTION:** A person with hemorrhages or many other diseases were not to be seen in public. A woman who suffered for many years and received no relief was so desperate to find help since she spent all she had on physicians and they could find not cure her.

She ventured into the crowds who were surrounding Jesus. She made her way thru the crowd to be near Him. When she was close enough, she touched his clothing and her hemorrhage stopped. Because of His powers, Jesus knew someone touched him. Everyone denied touching him but when the woman knew she could not keep it a secret she stepped up and admitted what she did. I am sure she was very afraid to admit this and thought she would be reprimanded. But her faith gave her the strength she needed to admit what she did in order to be healed. Jesus saw her faith and made her well.

Having faith in Jesus is so very important. No matter what we are going through, Jesus is always there for us. He will help you get through the good and the bad and never judge us.

This bible verse makes me think of my Mom. She had consistent pain for over eight years and no doctor or test could find a cure. She would always ask me if Jesus was listening to her prayers for healing. I told her to keep believing and have faith. He might not answer your prayer today, tomorrow or next month but in his own time. I always encouraged her every day I talked with her. Unfortunately, she was never cured. I am sure because of her faith when she passed away and went to heaven, Jesus opened his arms and wrapped them around her and took the pain away.

Always have the faith no matter what because Jesus will always be there for you.

*PRAYER: Dear Jesus, During this difficult time for our world, please see the faith we have. Know that we believe in you and are thankful what you did for us on the cross. Amen.*

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*Saturday, February 20, 2021*

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 23:47

When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said "Certainly this man was innocent"

**REFLECTION:** Merriam Webster says "transfigure means to give a new and typically exalted or spiritual appearance; to transform outwardly and usually for the better."

The centurion was a man of duty. A man who was expected to follow directions without question. Yet, at the foot of the



cross, the realization that something terribly wrong had taken place occurred. Have you ever wondered what happened afterward? Did the centurion go back to "business as usual" the next day? The day after that? Somehow I doubt it.

The transformation we undergo when we develop a relationship with our Savior changes us. It begins deep inside, and creates in us a new being. The transformation is "usually for the better."

Sometimes it doesn't feel like it. Our human nature makes us want to go back to our selfish self. We become too wrapped up in the world around us, and sin becomes prominent... greed, envy, and quite often in these days, division and hate. It is easy to give in; easy to give up. But we have been shown the way by the One who overcame all that for us.

We know where to go when our earthly selves are being led into this hateful, hurtful trap. Back to the One who gave His all for us to be free of it. Back to the foot of the cross where we can say "Certainly this man was innocent" and then allow Him to lead us to total transformation.

**PRAYER:** *From the song by Keith Green " Make my life a prayer to you, I want to do what you want me to... No empty words, and no white lies, no token prayers, no compromise". Amen.*

