

Put away the sword!



Readings for Radicals

A PEACE AND JUSTICE LECTIONARY

Lent Year B

Lent is the season of the Christian year when worshipers take a liturgical journey toward the cross. Jesus remembers Zechariah's prophecy of a peaceful king who comes to Jerusalem not on the prancing steed of a conqueror, but on a donkey, a lowly beast of burden. Practicing the art of political theater, Jesus enters Jerusalem as a peaceful messiah. Inside the city, Jesus attacks the injustices of the temple system. As the Romans try to arrest Jesus, he emphatically warns Peter, and all of us listeners, to put away the sword. Lent is a time for practicing the spiritual disciplines of compassion for the poor, resistance to evil and justice for the oppressed.

Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1-12 The fast that God seeks is to do justice, free the oppressed, share bread with the hungry, care for the homeless poor, and clothe the naked.

Psalms 51:1-7 A plea for God to deliver us from bloodshed.

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 Christians put no obstacle in another's way, endure hardships, practice patience, and use the weapon of righteousness.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 Do not store up treasures on earth.

First Sunday in Lent	Gen. 9:8-17 God decides to act nonviolently toward creation. 1 Peter 3:18-22 The powers are subject to God.
Second Sunday in Lent	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 Our common ancestor Abraham ties many nations together. Psalm 22:23-31 The poor shall eat and be satisfied. Dominion belongs to God, who rules the nations. Mark 8:1-38 Jesus' followers must take up the cross, rather than violent resistance.
Third Sunday in Lent	Exodus 20:1-7 You shall not kill. Corinthians 1:18-25 The nonviolent way of the cross seems foolish, but is really power and wisdom. John 2:13-22 Jesus symbolically destroys the temple as an economic institution benefiting the religious elite.
Fourth Sunday in Lent	John 3:14-21 God sent Jesus to save, not condemn the world.
Palm Sunday	John 12:12-16 In political theater, Jesus publicly acts out Zechariah's promise of a humble ruler who comes in peace. Isaiah 50:4-9a The nonviolence of the Suffering Servant. Philippians 2:5-11 The self-emptying of Christ. Mark 14:1-15:47 Jesus publicly affirms a woman's extravagant act, says the poor are always with us, and struggles with the way of nonviolence in death; Peter uses his sword; Jesus is crucified between social bandits and dies without retaliating. Mark 15:1-39, 40-47 Jesus is questioned about the political nature of his kingship; Pilate offers the people a choice between violent Jesus Barabbas and nonviolent Jesus BarJoseph; Jesus was crucified for a political crime as "King of the Jews;" Jesus' divine nature is recognized by a soldier.

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