

Lent Devotional March 24, 2026

Scripture

Amos 5:6-15

*6 Seek the LORD and live,
or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,
and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.
7 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,
and bring righteousness to the ground!*

*8 The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,
and turns deep darkness into the morning,
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,
the LORD is his name,
9 who makes destruction flash out against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.*

*10 They hate the one who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.*

*11 Therefore because you trample on the poor
and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.*

*12 For I know how many are your transgressions,
and how great are your sins —
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and push aside the needy in the gate.
13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;
for it is an evil time.*

*14 Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said.*

*15 Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Watley Maxell '25

Leadership With A Cause

“No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.”

As Christians, our identity as Christ-followers is inherent in our name. However, we live in complicated, divisive times, where that simple truth has been problematized and distorted by contrarianism. The inclination to oppose or reject Christian practice and/or belief, often for the sake of likes, clicks, and platform engagement, has become a scourge among Christians on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

In our efforts to delve into the complexities of our faith, to seek deeper truth, and to hold leadership accountable, too many faith leaders have adopted culturally-modeled practices steeped in disagreement, exposure, and controversy rather than the Christian practices of private conversation, mediation, and the counsel of leadership as exemplified by Jesus in Matthew 18.

When we, as leaders, engage in “call-out culture” in our attempts to address concerns within the church, regardless of the amount of public engagement, our posts become treacherous without a cause, which can only lead to shame.

The church is an imperfect institution plagued by the same ills that secular institutions face. However, one of the characteristics that makes us distinct is the way we solve our disagreements and address impropriety. When we model ourselves in the way of Christ, we are affirmed by our desire to embody the ways of Christ. When we embody worldly divisiveness, we become treacherous without the cause of Christ to empower us.

Lent, as a time of deep personal reflection, prayer, fasting, and repentance, offers us an opportunity to take stock of areas in our lives that may go unintended: areas where we have slipped into habits that don’t align with our Christian identity, areas that make us detractors and not defenders of our faith in practice, areas that draw attention to us, our posts and our platforms, but do not edify the body of Christ.

Let us commit to rooting out our contrarian tendencies, repenting, and replacing them with Christian practices of resolution.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

We come today confessing that sometimes we have fallen into contrarianism as we have sought to address issues within the church and culture. Lord, remind us of our Christian identity and the ways of reconciliation that Jesus modeled for us. Help us to not be like those who are treacherous without a cause, but help us to embody the cause of Christ in all we do.

In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.