

Lent Devotional March 31, 2026

Scripture

Lamentations 1:17-22

*17 Zion stretches out her hands,
but there is no one to comfort her;
the Lord has commanded against Jacob
that his neighbors should become his foes;
Jerusalem has become
a filthy thing among them.*

*18 The Lord is in the right,
for I have rebelled against his word;
but hear, all you peoples,
and behold my suffering;
my young women and young men
have gone into captivity.*

*19 I called to my lovers,
but they deceived me;
my priests and elders
perished in the city
while seeking food
to revive their lives.*

*20 Look, O Lord, at how distressed I am;
my stomach churns;
my heart is wrung within me
because I have been very rebellious.
In the street the sword bereaves;
in the house it is like death.*

*21 They heard how I was groaning,
with no one to comfort me.
All my enemies heard of my trouble;
they are glad that you have done it.
Bring on the day that you have announced,
and let them be as I am.*

*22 Let all their evildoing come before you,
and deal with them
as you have dealt with me
because of all my transgressions;
for my groans are many,
and my heart is faint.*

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. MaryAnn Rennie '24

In the Scots language, “to greet” is not always to offer a welcome. “Greetin’” is something that upset children do, or fans of the losing team, or disgruntled workers. In Scots, “greet” means weeping, crying, lamenting, complaining, or grumbling. In the Scottish song “Coulter’s Candy,” a child sits on a mother’s knee “greetin’ for a wee bawbee,” crying for a small coin.

Sometimes people get together for a “greetin’ meeting.” This is a meeting where a group can share their grumbles about the world and the sadness of their lot. The almost dismissive term captures an unintentional moment of raw humanity embraced by human kindness. Greetin’ meetings can be profound moments of sorrow spoken aloud and embraced with the compassion of others. The companions may not fix the grief, but words and presence offer a hook of hope or a small foundation from which life might begin again.

A greetin’ meeting can traverse between Scots and English dialects as from the depths of despair we can be welcomed into the care and compassion of others.

Lamentations, while not a greetin’ meeting, captures the sorrow and distance of these encounters. Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her. In Holy Week we are drawn into that same sense of isolation. As Jesus walks between Bethany and Jerusalem, the circle of friends grows smaller, the shadows lengthen, the distance between human pain and divine presence feels vast.

Even from the depths of lament, there are glimmers that God’s welcome is beginning to stir. Verse 22 reflects the God who seems absent reaching into human life once more.

Holy Week is a bumpy ride that contrasts human failings with divine love and compassion. But it is a bumpy ride that reminds us that beyond the greetin’ of lament and sorrow, we are greeted with God’s embrace.

Prayer

Lord of sorrow,
Whose patience is inexhaustible:
with each step we walk this week
the burden of Your sorrow will curve our shoulders;
with each step we walk,
Your words will challenge our thoughts and our actions;
with each step we walk,
Your presence with us will feel more distant.

Christ of compassion,
whose purpose is life-restoring:
with each step You take,
You will be part of human experience;
with each step You take,
You will demonstrate love in action;
with each step You take,
God’s welcome will be declared.
Amen.