



*\*Throughout the season, one way of prayer could be to interiorize our theme verses from Luke:*

As they were going along the road,  
someone said to him,  
'I will follow you wherever you go.'  
And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes,  
and birds of the air have nests;  
but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'  
To another he said,  
'Follow me.'  
But he said,  
'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'  
But Jesus said to him,  
'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you,  
go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'  
Another said,  
'I will follow you, Lord;  
but let me first say farewell to those at my home.'

Jesus said to him,  
'No one who puts a hand to the plough  
and looks back is fit  
for the kingdom of God.'

# In the Journal

## *Pillar Journal Vol. 7 No. 2*

*Lent 2025*

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*Cover Art: Blake Johnson*

*Prayer Reflections written by Molly Kehrer*

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Art for Reflection

(5) ----- “Luke 9.62” | Blake Johnson | 2025

(9) ----- “Horse Drawn Plough, Land Girl” | Laura Knight | ca. 1944

(12-13) ----- “The Early Ploughman” | Samuel Palmer | 1861

(20-21) ----- “The Plough” | George Clausen | 1893

(24-25) ----- “The Veteran in a New Field” | Winslow Homer | 1865

*\*All pieces in the public domain and sourced from  
metmuseum.org and artvee.com*

# No Looking Back

Jon Brown  
Lent 2025

Lent, the 7-week span including 6 Sundays where we set our hearts and minds with Christ to the cross and its implications for our lives and for the world. We're borrowing a line from Luke's Gospel to guide our Lenten journey. Jesus says, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Most of us don't plough fields at all, let alone by hand, so the image can get lost in translation. If you're ploughing a field (imagine a rototiller in your garden) trying to keep the rows straight and you look back to admire the work you've already done, your row will necessarily become crooked.

It won't be a row at all, you're not really fit for ploughing.

We're borrowing that image for our Lenten journey we're calling it "No looking back."

The Gospel context for our Lenten line belongs to Jesus, he was calling disciples to himself, orienting them to a life on mission with God in His kingdom. It seemed like most of them were willing. As Luke writes, "someone said to Jesus, 'I will follow you wherever you go.'" There was something compelling about Jesus. There were things about his life and behavior that attracted crowds and all kinds of curiosity. He does still. There was a buzz about him and to be given access to him was a stunning honor and an incredible privilege. Some were willing to go wherever Jesus went, for folks who didn't travel much or really, for that matter, ever, "to follow Jesus wherever" was a stunning claim.



Others were willing too but had reasons to delay, one said, “First let me go bury my father,” arguably the most significant and holy role a son plays in 1st century Israel. That was important work he had to get done. Another said, “first let me go say farewell to those at my home.”

Hard to argue with a simple goodbye. In each case, in other words, “Now isn’t the best time. I’m willing, it’s just that there are a few other things on my plate right now. I’ll catch up with you.” And then Jesus offers our line, “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

No looking back.

I’m guessing most of us who read a Pillar journal during Lent are all kinds of willing to follow Jesus wherever he goes. We’re captivated by his person, we’ve experienced the blessing of his grace, we’re in love with his heart and want to share in his mission. But, if we’re honest, there are some things that get in the way, some important matters we need to attend.

The commitment to follow Jesus wherever he goes isn’t just a promise to end up where he does, that would be easier. The commitment to follow Jesus wherever he goes isn’t just to end up where he does, it’s a commitment to go the way he goes, not just where he goes, but to walk with him, to be with him, to be like him.

We don’t really get to say “we’d like the empty tomb, but we’d like to avoid the cross.” We don’t really get to say, “we look forward to your coming kingdom, we just don’t want to sacrifice or suffer or experience, really, any inconvenience at all.”

This Lent we’re inviting you again to the basic reality of Christian discipleship, to follow Jesus wherever he goes,

No looking back.

It will cost us something, we’ll have to give up of ourselves, we’ll have to concede playing by the rules of the world’s power games and instead go the way of humility and gentleness, patience and grace.

We’ll have to give up the need to be right to win an argument for the sake of the invitation to be like Jesus in love.

No looking back.

“I will follow you wherever you go.”

Join us.

## Using This Journal

This Lenten season we invite you into prayer. At their best these journals always strive to do just that: call us to prayer, prompt us in prayer, and guide us toward a deeper life of prayer. That might look like some quiet solitary moments at the start or close of the day, or maybe its with a trusted friend, or perhaps some intentional time as a family to enter into these words together.

There are six prayer reflections to guide you through the season. These can be taken at whatever pace is fitting for you. It corresponds to one for each week of Lent, but it would also work to go back and repeat them if you go at a faster rate. Take them in and let your mind and your spirit be open to where the Holy Spirit might be leading you. A big thank-you is in order to Molly Kehrer for crafting these beautiful reflections and prompts.

Blake Johnson created a stunningly vivid work of art inspired by our theme verses Luke 9:58-62. Blake offered this reflecting on his piece, “There seem to be two similar/different sides of the idea of ‘considering the cost.’ One is that we’d turn our faces and leave something behind, and another is that we would stay & labor within a particular framework or set of boundaries. As Christians we are bound to certain rituals and liturgies. Bound to certain hopes. We plant seeds in fields but we don’t make them grow. We wait, we pray, we repent, we forgive, we die, and we are reborn.” Thank you, Blake for this expression of your Christian imagination.

As Pastor Jon wrote, the image of the plough worker is one that not all of us are intimately familiar with. So as a way to invite us deeper into that, in addition to Blake’s piece, there are several other pieces depicting a plough or someone working a field from art history. Use these as further tools for prayer. Consider the different expressions, the colors, the textures and how it might draw you into the story of Jesus this season.

The Lord be with you,  
Jonathan Gabhart



## I.

*An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”*

Luke 10.25-28

In this passage, we find the familiar words of the Shema, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength,” instructions that are a cornerstone of the Jewish faith. Historically, the Shema is a prayer recited morning at night by Jewish believers.

This practice heeds Moses’ encouragement to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6, “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deut.6.6-9)

Below is the most commonly recited portion of the Shema.

This Lenten season, consider reciting and/or interiorizing this prayer alone, or with your family.

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.  
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

The word “shema” in the Hebrew text translates to “hear” or “listen” or “pay attention to.” This is a call to action and foundational to our faith. “Shema” also means to obey—listening and doing are two sides of the same coin.

True obedience requires us to be intentional about how we love God with all of our heart, soul and strength. As you interiorize or pray these words, contemplate what it looks like to allow these instructions to inform your daily interactions and decisions. Is there a cost to making choices that honor these commands?





## II.

*“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.”*

Luke 12.35-37

Perhaps like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, you find yourself in a place of waiting, too: waiting in this season of Lent, when we look towards the hope of Easter and the salvation we anticipate in the Resurrection. Or maybe yours feels like a different kind of waiting...waiting for good news, for a diagnosis, for a child to return home, for a relationship to be mended, for what’s “next,” for long-awaited answers to hard questions, for a miracle.

As Christ-followers we can logically understand that we’re called to wait, but the practice of waiting stretches us or sometimes even pushes us right up to what feels like the end of ourselves. No matter how difficult waiting on hope or a breakthrough might seem, we can put our energy into preparing our hearts and minds as we seek Christ’s peace and wait on His promises. We do this through prayer, time in the Word, and time in fellowship with the Body.

This Lent and moving forward, what does it look like to be awake when the master comes? How do we stay dressed for action and keep our lamps burning in the day to day of life and work and community? Is there one step you can take this week—in prayer or relationship, to surrender the anxiety or stress of waiting and to trust that Jesus will meet you in your need?

*A Practice:* Keep a jar over Lent and to add to it any worries or anxieties that arise. The exercise of putting a “care” in the jar would represent giving our requests to God and then committing to praying over them but not worrying over them. As a way of “not looking back,” once it’s in the jar, the encouragement is to pray and trust that God sees it and will cover it. An act of surrender and learning to trust him more.

*Guiding Verse:* Luke 12.22-25. “And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”

III.

*“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”*

Luke 15:31-32

When we consider the cost of following Jesus, we can acknowledge that it’s not all pomp and circumstance in the day to day. Life as a follower of Christ can be really hard. We’re not immune to suffering, but rather are refined and made more like Christ when we endure suffering with grace.

We have access to the power of the name of Jesus, and when we call on him in prayer, God is limitless in his abilities and abundantly generous in his provision of peace or joy or comfort or tangible needs. What does it mean to believe deeply that all that God has to offer is ours?

And what does it mean to live generously and hospitably ourselves, honoring the ones around us who have yet to encounter Jesus personally? Or celebrating with and then walking alongside those who newly profess Jesus as Lord? In what ways can we support those who are curious? Seeking? How can we love others well so as to shine the light of Christ in our relationships and encounters with others?

## IV.

*“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham.\* The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.\* He called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.” But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.” He said, “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.” Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.” He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” ’*

Luke 16:19-31

Questions for reflection as a separate option: How do we define wealth in our own lives? Do material possessions and status matter more to us than noticing and meeting the needs of others? Or do we prioritize relationships and how we treat and care for those in proximity? Where can I/we/we as a family identify a need right in front of us or nearby? What would it take to meet that need?

Prayer:

O Discerning Spirit, whose wisdom and guidance are available for all who are in Christ,

Quiet our minds to rest from the busyness of this day.  
Reclaim this moment, holy even in the ordinary because you have ordained it.

Give us pause to acknowledge your presence.  
Remove all distractions from the Truth of your infallible Word.  
Help us to choose deep nourishment—to set down what we might otherwise exchange for the connection you freely offer.

Make us noticers of the things that matter to you—noticers of your people, noticers of your Creation, noticers of the calling you’ve placed on each of our lives.

Show us more of your hope for this world.  
Tune our hearts to your still small voice.  
Prompt us to be light-bearers, justice-seekers, mercy-bringers, grace-agents.

As we look to whatever might be next: a meal around the table, an important conversation, the end of the day, a drive somewhere, laundry, teach us to remember your ‘witness’ in each act and guide us to recognize them all as sacred.

Amen.



## V.

*As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth\* is passing by.' Then he shouted, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.*

Luke 18:35-40

In the passages from this week's teaching (Luke 18.31-19.27), we read of Jesus foretelling of his death a third time, how he healed the blind beggar, his encounter and engagement with Zacchaeus, and the parable of the ten minas. These stories give helpful context to Jesus' life and ministry, to the way he approached those in need, and to the way he extended salvation to the lost. As Jesus tells the parable of the ten minas, he teaches the crowd that faithfulness—even with little, will be rewarded. Those who are faithful and continue doing God's work will live in eternity with him. As Christians, we are called to make decisions with eternity in mind. Even in the little things, God notices our intentional efforts.

As we move nearer to Easter and the celebration of the Resurrection, what does it look like to live like the blind beggar or Zacchaeus?

Full on faith with no holds barred. Nothing to lose and everything to gain by trusting Jesus.

We are called to continue doing God's work, modeling Christ here on earth. This begins at home with those closest to us and radiates out in circles from there.

How are we like Christ to those in our spheres of influence? Do others experience us as loving and living like Jesus?



W. Taylor 1875

## VI.

*As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.'*\*

*Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; and he said, 'It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer"; but you have made it a den of robbers.'*

*Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spell-bound by what they heard.*

Luke 19:41-44

As Jesus enters Jerusalem in Luke 19:28-44, he weeps over the city, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.”

Jesus wept because he had brought with him peace, but Jerusalem chose the sword instead.

Today we live among virulent words, vastly-opposing opinions and dialogues, a lack of civility in some cases and utter hostility in others. We disagree with those we used to call friends, we shift from true peace in familial relationships to surface-level survival on holidays and at celebrations. We allow our ideas, our agendas, our perceptions to color the way we treat one another. And sometimes—maybe often, we forget Christ in the middle of the mess.

Somehow in his grace, the mess is exactly where Christ meets us. And it's precisely where he desires to enter in. He can handle our messes, our mistakes, our conflict, and he offers peace just like he did 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem. It's there for all who trust in him, but also for those who don't yet know his heart. Christ's peace, and Christ's people when we choose his peace, are the antidote to anger, hostility, and the sword.

This week as we reflect on Palm Sunday and our humble Savior, weeping over Jerusalem on a donkey on his way to the cross that erases all sin, let us pray with confidence to the Father for help and guidance on the path to peace. It's possible in our hearts and it's possible in our homes. It's possible in our cities and in our schools. It's possible in our circumstances and in the circumstances of the world, but we'll have to set down our swords first. There's no turning back.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Amen.

As they were going along the road,  
someone said to him,  
'I will follow you wherever you go.'  
And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes,  
and birds of the air have nests;  
but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'  
To another he said,  
'Follow me.'  
But he said,  
'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'  
But Jesus said to him,  
'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you,  
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Luke 9.57-62



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