

**Lent, Holy Week and Easter  
At Immanuel**

**Lent:**

**Sunday Services: 9am**

**Bible Study: 10:30 (ish)**

**During the Week: Lenten Guide**

**Holy Week:**

**Palm Sunday Service: 9am**

Children especially are invited to be part of the entrance procession with the waving of palm branches

**Palm Sunday Brunch: 10:30am**

From your favorite egg bake to cinnamon rolls, bring your favorite breakfast treats to share, invite some friends and family, and plan to enjoy some time of food and fellowship as we celebrate all Jesus has done for us.

**Holy Thursday Service - 6:30 pm**

**Good Friday Service - 6:30pm**

**Easter:**

**Sunday Service: 9am**

**2025 Lenten Guide  
Immanuel Lutheran Swea City**



## Introduction

# Season of Lent

In the last few weeks, as I have looked ahead towards the season of Lent and pondered what our focus might be, the following phrase has been stuck in my head, “Teach them to pray.”

It comes from the passage in Luke 11 when the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to better pray. It wasn't that they had no idea how to pray or what prayer was about. After all, they had all grown up in Jewish households which were religious enough for them to know about the promised Messiah. It was that they saw something different in how Jesus prayed.

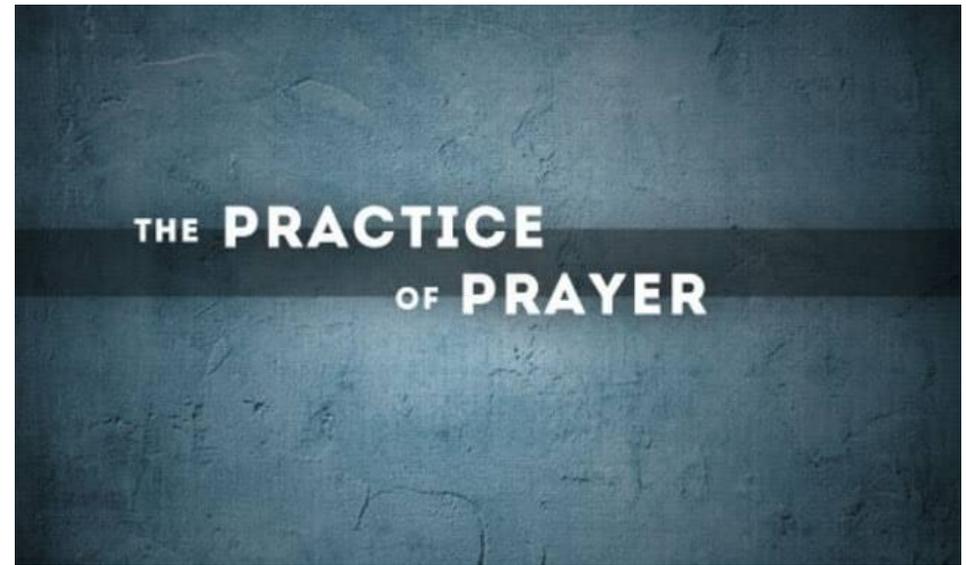
One of the things I love about kids is that they seem to get prayer in a real and honest way. They don't hesitate to say thank you for their toys while asking for a puppy. They voice what is on their mind in the moment with little care or concern for what is “correct” or “proper” in prayer.

Most of us lose that freedom as we get older. I know I have. I started to believe that God doesn't have time to hear about the small things, the details of my life. I worry that I'll say the wrong words. I get caught up in trying to be professional in my prayers. And I forget that prayer, ultimately, is all about deepening my relationship with my heavenly Father.

So we are jumping into prayer this season of Lent. During the services, we will be looking at different types of prayer and how each of them fits into the life of the church and our personal life of prayer. And then during the week, I hope you'll embrace your inner child and try some prayers that are a little out of the box and bring us back to the basics. Prayers that reconnect us with that child like faith we embraced so easily before we became smart enough to “know better.”

And I hope you'll be inspired to seek out new and different ways to pray from time to time. Not because what you are doing is wrong, but because you might discover that God has been waiting to speak to you in a whole new way!

Pastor Sara



## Lenten Bible Study

Sundays @ 10:30

(Or what makes sense after service)

In this 4 week study, we will be taking a dive into prayer as we focus on a deeper understanding of the four key “ingredients” of personal prayer: Talking to God, Talking with God, Listening to God, and Being with God.

From those who have lots of questions about prayer, to those who feel like their prayer life has grown routine and lifeless, to those who have a rich and full prayer life at the moment, there is something for everyone in this study.

Sessions will be a combination of video and discussion with an option for activities and reading during the week. We hope to see you at one or more of the studies!

Psssstt....Teens and young adults are welcome as well!

## Prayer Activity: Puddle Prayer

Needs: A rainy day that creates some mud puddles. Or a water hose and some dirt! Rain boots. Perhaps a change of clothes.

It's Holy Week so we won't be talking about a specific prayer focus this week. Instead, we going to have fun and get out in what I hope will be some spring like weather!

Once the weather has created some puddles for you, or you have created some for yourself, spend time splashing around. Imagine each puddle is a different situation or person that you want to know the love of Jesus. As you jump, say the person's name out loud and see how big a splash you can make. Ask God to give you the courage to splash out his love into those places and people.



## Ash Wednesday

### Did you not know?

Genesis 2:7 "...then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."

Not only did I grow on a farm, I grew up living in an old farmhouse heated by a wood stove in basement and oil stove in the kitchen during the winter while being cooled by open windows in the summer. Every Saturday that I



can remember from my childhood, my mom launched an attack against dust in our house. Armed with a soft cloth and a can of lemon-scented pledge, it was the last task of Saturday chores to systematically go through the house and clear as many surfaces as possible in an attempt to start the next week as dust free as possible.

When I was a 4th grader, I had some allergy testing done in an attempt to figure out some random health issues I was having. The one thing that came up on the panel? An allergy to dust. I remember my mom stopping the doctor as he explained how to make a house relatively dust free to say, "We live on a farm. Dust is part of our lives. Just tell me what the best meds will be for her to take." Our one saving grace; we lived on a paved road instead of one of the many gravel roads in the area.

To be rid of dust is no easy task, even for those who don't live on farms. It is all around us, floating in the air, waiting for us to stand still long enough to land. Let everything sit still long enough, and the dust will begin to obscure the true appearance of the item upon which it sits. It will dull the colors, make edges appear fuzzy, and even create a place for bacteria and mold to take hold.

So it is with sin. In this fallen world, there are temptations to sin constantly surrounding us. Most of them so small that, like a single spec of dust, they are rarely noticed unless the light happens to hit them just right. But they accumulate and cluster and before we know it, we find ourselves covered

in sin as we allow those temptations to get the better of us. And just like my mom going to war against the dust, we find ourselves going to war with our sin as we seek forgiveness and hope for God's mercy to cover us.

We do good things for our family and friends, neighbors and community trying to prove we are worthy of God's love. We go to church and pray we aren't a lost cause, promising to do better if we are given just one more chance to prove ourselves. We hear the words of Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death—and do everything we can to sprint in the opposite direction fearing we will be called upon to pay the price and forgetting the promise of eternal life.



Ash Wednesday invites us to sit with the truth of our sin. It invites us to stop trying to run away from the reality that we have failed and there is nothing we can do in our own power to fix the mess we have gotten ourselves into. Ash Wednesday reminds us that just as God has the

power to bring life from dead dust, He has the power to bring life to our dead, sin-filled selves.

As you receive the ashes, feel their grit on your forehead, look at the blemish they leave on your face in the mirror, let yourself be reminded of God's power to overcome anything and everything in this world, including your sin. Yes, death will someday come for us all unless Jesus returns first but do not despair, for Jesus has defeated death. Just as death could not hold him in the tomb, we will on that last day, when Jesus does return, find ourselves also having defeated sin and death.

## Week #6

# Holy Week

## DEVOTIONAL

Luke 19: 38

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory to God!

I have always found Holy Week to be an incredible emotional roller-coaster. It starts off with the great proclamation and celebration and Jesus enters Jerusalem. If you don't know the rest of the story, it seems like the start to a great week and new level of popularity for Jesus.

Then, on Thursday, we remember the Last Supper and hear Jesus say that someone eating there, with him, would betray him. We start to see hints that this week might not be what we initially thought. By noon on Friday, Jesus hangs on the cross, condemned to die in one of the worst ways known to man. He has done nothing wrong. He is killed because he is a threat to the politically powerful of the day.

But wait, that's not the end of the story. God is still at work. And Sunday morning we run to the tomb only to find it empty. Jesus has risen! He has defeated death! Hope is renewed! This is news even more exciting than when he came into Jerusalem a week ago!



## In His Name

### DEVOTIONAL

John 20:24-29

Key Verse: "Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'" John 20:28



Poor Thomas. Always getting such a bad rap for his doubt. I've said it before and I'll keep saying it...I would probably have been just like Thomas. I would have not

handled well the reality that I was the one on the outside, the one who missed out on seeing the risen Christ. Personally, I have to admit, I admire Thomas' restraint as I would have had some harsher words to say.

But when we focus on Thomas and his doubt, we miss what is arguably the most important part of this passage of Scripture: Thomas' declaration of faith.

Too often we hold onto our doubt, our disbelief, our anger because, honestly, it feels good. It feels like we are in control. It feels like we have a say in how things are supposed to go. It feels like we have the upper hand on God. "Really God? If you love me, then prove it. Do this. Do that. Fix things. Make my life feel fair. Haven't you seen that I have earned the right for you to do as I demand?"

When we are stuck in this place, it often doesn't matter how much God moves in our lives, our sin makes us blind to who He is and how He is working in our lives. Thomas shows us what it means to let go of that an acknowledge the presence of God in our midst. He could have said it was a trick, many of the day did. He could have said I

And just as Jesus was set apart for a specific purpose and plan in this world, so are we. God has created us for a specific purpose and plan and when we stop trying to make it all about us, we open up space to discover what that plan is for our lives. Embracing the way God has created us is part of discovering what makes us set apart, what makes us holy.

### Prayer Activity: Set Apart Prayer

Needs: Skittles, plate, hot water

1. Explain that this week the activity we have is going to focus on praying that God would use us to share his love with others.
2. God has created each of us to be one of a kind. We each have a different combination of personalities, skills, and hobbies. For each skittle you put on the plate, name something that makes you, you! (examples: I find puppies to be really funny. I like to try new foods. I enjoy learning to play basketball. I notice when someone is sad.) Family and friends can help you out if you need help!
3. Keep going until you have at least 6 skittles on your plate. (You can have as many as you want as long as there is still some space for water! Consider putting them in a circle or some other shape.)
4. Carefully pour the hot water on your plate and watch as the skittles begin to release their color.
5. As you see the colors starting to swirl around, making a unique, one of a kind pattern, pray that Jesus will help you, in your unique one of a kind way, share His love with other people you know.

Sample Prayer: Dear Jesus, Thank you for making me so that I (insert gift, talent, personality trait). Help me to use that to show my (friends, family, co-workers, classmates) how much you love them. In Your name I pray, Amen.



need to see more, he wouldn't be the first. He could have declared it impossible, too good to be true, and walked away, but he didn't.

"My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaims. It is a profession of faith, an exclamation of praise, and a confession of sin and doubt all rolled into one. May we, when we run into God's presence in our life, be able to see it clearly and exclaim the same.

## Prayer Activity: Dice Prayer

Needs: Cube Cutout, Scissors, Double sided tape or glue stick, Something to write or color with.

1. Explain that this week the activity we have is going to focus on praying for other people and asking God to take care of them.
2. In each square on the cutout, list someone you could be praying for. An example of what could go in each square could be:
  - A. Someone who is sick
  - B. Someone who is your friend
  - C. Someone who is sad/missing someone/grieving
  - D. Someone you see at school or work each day
  - E. Someone who lives far away
  - F. Someone you don't like at the moment.
3. Cut out the cube and fold on dotted lines.
4. Use tabs to tape or glue the cube together.
5. Roll your new prayer dice and see who you will be praying for today.
6. Pray for that person. It doesn't have to be long or elaborate. If you don't know where to start, or are leading a young child, use the sample prayer below.

Sample Prayer: Jesus, I pray for (name) because they (fill in the reason). Help them to know that you love them and care about them. In Your Name I Pray, Amen.

You can pray roll the dice for different person each day, or just



## Week #5

# To do God's Will

## DEVOTIONAL

Matthew 26:36-46

Key Verse: "And going a little father, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'" Matthew 26:39

Let's be honest, it isn't always easy to do the will of God. It isn't always easy to forgive. It isn't always easy to love others. It isn't always easy to refrain from getting even. And yet, Scriptures make it clear again and again that we are called to a higher standard, a standard which flees from the sin which so easily entangles us (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Why? Because we are a people set apart, a people who in Baptism, in dying to our old self and rising to a new life in Christ, have been made holy. Thankfully, we aren't thrown into the task alone. We have been given the Holy Spirit and called to a community of faith to strengthen, empower and support us. We have faith, we trust in God's promise that our sins are forgiven in Christ's death on the cross. And we start each day anew, praying that God will make this a day where we answer the call to share his love with those around us.

When we consider Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane just after the last supper and just before the events of Good Friday really get underway, we have this moment of prayer where Jesus asks for there to be another way. It is a very human prayer. It is a prayer which knows the pain and suffering, the betrayal and heartache to come in the next 12-24 hours, and wishes there could be another way. It is a prayer that, despite all of his human desire to run the other direction, says, "But ultimately it isn't about me, it's about you." It is a prayer which sets Jesus apart as the Holy Son of God.

when we gather with our family and friends. One of the ways he helps us pray together well, is to give us recited or memorized common prayers.

6. Choose a prayer to all pray together at the same time. It can be one that you all already know, or one you read together out of the Prayerbook. Not sure what to pray? Start with praying the Lord's Prayer!

## The Lord's Prayer

Our father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
And the glory.  
For ever and ever.  
Amen.



## Week #2

### By the way...

#### DEVOTIONAL

Luke 17:11-19

Key Verse: "Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God." Luke 17:15

Several years ago I was sorting through our main storage closet with my mom in my childhood home. Everything was stored there. The old dining room table that was always going to get refinished, the



chest full of black and white photos depicted people we assumed to be relatives, clothes one sibling had outgrown waiting for the next to grow into them, clothes that were simply out of season, and even an old, authentic German coo-coo clock that never worked a single day in my life.

Every few years we would pull everything out, sort through it, assess what was still of enough value to keep, and haul the rest to Good Will. This particular year of sorting, we came across a thick plastic bag absolutely stuffed to the max with photos and greeting cards. My grandmother had kept every note, card, photo, and memento my family had ever sent to her. We paused, marveling at the long forgotten words and memories preserved and cherished by her for so many years. Perhaps the most humorous for me were the thank you notes.

It was a rule in our house that for every Christmas season and birthday celebration, thank you notes were to be written and sent out before you were allowed to use the item or spend the cash given to you. Thus, the notes sent to my grandmother didn't always reflect

the most grateful of heartfelt sentiments, often making it clear that mom was making me write the note. Never dad, always mom.

While I hated writing them as a child, finding that bag all those years later made me so very thankful my mom insisted. My grandparents were never rich, they were never able to shower their many grandchildren with elaborate gifts, but they never let us feel forgotten or unwelcome. I know they wished they could do more. It was clear that the thanks they received for what they were able to give was never expected or required, but it was always greatly appreciated.



In Luke 17, Jesus is well into his public ministry. He is known as someone who has the power to work miracles. People are seeking him out to be healed, to be made whole, to be restored to the life they knew before life threw them a curveball. So when ten lepers call out to him as he enters a village, it isn't unexpected.

What is unexpected is, that after receiving this very life changing gift of healing, a gift which will allow them to rejoin their families, reconnect with friends, and regain their very humanity, only ONE thinks to turn back for a moment and say thank you to the gift giver.

Everyday we are given the gift of that day from God. How often do we think to stop, turn our eyes and hearts towards heaven, and say thanks for everything he has given us?

PS - Thanks to my mom for teaching me how much a simple thank you can mean.

One of the things I believe we too often miss when we talk about this passage of scripture is the heart, the wisdom it contains in helping us stay connected with our family and friends. Think about it, if you know you have messed up, if you know you are at fault, would you rather be called out publically or privately? How many of us appreciate the person who comes to us first before going to our boss or supervisor when they have an issue?

The guidance Jesus is giving here in Matthew 18 gives us a chance to sit down and have a real conversation. It gives each person a chance to be heard and chance to take ownership of their actions. It gives each person not a chance to make excuses but provide context for a specific situation and see a bigger picture. It gives each person a chance to say I'm sorry for my part, please forgive me and for each person to proclaim the Gospel in saying, you are forgiven. It gives relationships between friends and family and chance to find healing and wholeness before they are broken beyond repair.

## Prayer Activity: Photo Album Prayer

Needs: Photo Albums or Scrapbooks (or phones) with photos of family and friends, Lutheran Prayerbook



1. Explain that this week the activity we have is going to focus on praying with other people.
2. Take some time to look at the photos you have of the friends and family who you know to be living their faith at the moment. See how many different people you can name

who know Jesus.

3. Don't forget to add the names of people from church!
4. Now try to imagine how long you would have to write down names if you tried to name every single Christian in the entire world!
5. God doesn't want us to just pray alone. He wants us to pray with other people which we do on Sunday when we go to church or

# Maintaining Relationships

## DEVOTIONAL

Matthew 18:15-20

Key Verse: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” Matthew 18:15

I must confess. There are a couple of reality TV shows which have caught my attention and drawn me in over the years. One of them was “Trading Spaces” where you swapped homes with your neighbors for a couple of days to re-do a room in their house while they did one in your house. As comedian Chonda Pierce once said, “We all watch it to see if there will be a fight at the end.” Most of the time the change was wonderful and welcome but when there was rumor of an upset house owner at the end, you didn’t dare miss the episode.



Shows where contestants live together while trying to win at the end, such as The Bachelor, Big Brother, and Survivor feature alliances made and broken. Secrets shared in hopes of gaining an advantage. All influenced to different degrees behind the scenes by producers and game twists to keep the drama alive and keep us all watching year after year, season after season.

But in the real world, in real life, how often do you confront the person who is telling you a lie, who is going behind your back, who is in some way damaging your relationship with them? Not many of us do until it is very nearly at its breaking point.

## Prayer Activity: Map Prayer

Needs: World Map or Globe, Internet Browser

1. Explain that this week the activity we have is going to focus on giving thanks for the many different cultures and people God has placed in our world.
2. Using either a paper map or an inflatable globe, pick a fun way to randomly select a country or region of the world. Perhaps you toss a cheerio onto the paper map, or point blindfolded, or catch an globe and the country closest to your right thumb is the one you have picked. Whatever your way, make it fun and make it somewhat random.
3. Look up the country you picked online. Learn at least 3 fun facts about them and look at some of the pictures that come up.
4. Say a prayer of thanksgiving for the people of that part of the world. What is it about their culture that you appreciate or you find especially unique and fun? Maybe you can give thanks for the foods they inspire, or maybe for something they manufacture that makes your life more enjoyable, or maybe you know someone from there and you can give thanks for that person!

Sample Prayer: Jesus, I give you thanks for the people of (country) . The world is a better place because they (fill in the reason) . Help each person who lives there to know how much you love them. In Your Name I Pray, Amen.

You can stick with one country for the family or per person for the week or you can choose a different culture each week. Do what works for you!

**Bonus Activity** - Make a one page print out with the fun facts about your country, what you are thankful for from that culture, and include a photo or two as a reminder of the people you are thanking God for this week.



## From a Distance

### DEVOTIONAL

Luke 7:1-10

Key Verse: “Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed.” - Luke 7:7

The story of Jesus healing the centurion’s servant is an interesting one. A centurion was a Roman army officer who would have been part of the occupying force in Israel at the time of Jesus. He was not Jewish and likely not even overly “spiritual” or “religious” even when it came to the Roman gods. His servant was likely someone who was enslaved to Rome in some way.

He would have known that he had no business approaching Jesus, this Jewish rabbi teaching about God’s love and mercy, and asking for a favor. He knew it would not go unnoticed that he bothered to go out of his way to ask for a servant to be healed. A family



member...that might have been understood. One of his soldiers who was particularly brave...accepted. But to humble himself to ask for healing for a servant? Unthinkable.

And yet, when he hears about all that Jesus is doing, he sets the wheels in motion to ask that Jesus would heal his servant. And when the centurion says that Jesus doesn’t need to come to his house, it isn't about denying his servant a chance to interact with this prophet who is quickly gaining in notoriety and popularity. It is because, despite the fact that he is not a person of faith, despite the fact that he is not Jewish and therefore not part of God’s chosen people, he still believes in the power of Jesus to heal by simply speaking, no

matter how close or how far away he would be when speaking those words.

It leaves us with an important question: How close do we need to believe God to be to hear and answer our prayers? Do we need to sense his presence, see a sign, have someone else confirm he is near? Or can we seek him no matter how near or far he may feel in any given moment? Are we like so many in the crowds who needed to have that personal encounter to believe? Or are we like the centurion who had faith in his power to heal by reputation and rumor alone?

### Prayer Activity: Rocket Prayer

Needs: Blank paper cut into strips, pen/pencil, tape, straw

1. Explain that this week the activity we have is going to focus on praying asking God to take of providing for the things we need.
2. From the paper, into pieces which measure about 2in x 1in.
3. On each piece of paper, write (or draw) a prayer request asking God to provide the things that we need to be able to live a safe and healthy life. (Some discussion on wants vs needs will likely be warranted here if praying with kids.)
4. Roll the paper into a cone shape where the bottom of the cone just a little bit larger than the straw and secure it with a small piece of tape.
5. Talk about trusting God to take care of all our daily needs because he loves us and has to power to take care of us.
6. Say your prayer and blow on the open end of the straw watching your prayer rocket fly as you give your trust to Jesus.

Sample Prayer: Jesus, I trust that you will provide the \_\_\_\_\_ I need to get through today. Thank you for loving me and providing for me. In Your Name I Pray, Amen.

