

## REVD MARK'S DAILY DEVOTIONALS #292 16<sup>TH</sup> – 20<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026

### MONDAY

READ ON...

16th February – Morning all... Two men broke into our church this weekend and trashed the place. What should have been a sanctuary of peace was left damaged and distressed, and the shock of seeing it in such a state brought real heartache. Among the items destroyed was a deeply meaningful anniversary gift given to my dad for twenty-five years of faithful service - an engraved crystal plate bearing his favourite scripture from John 15:13. "Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends." The crystal had been smashed into many pieces, as though something precious had been carelessly scattered. Yet in the middle of the fragments, one single piece of glass remained intact. On that surviving shard were just a few words: "Greater Love... John 15:13." Standing there, surrounded by what was broken, those unbroken words felt like more than coincidence. They felt like a quiet reminder from God Himself. Glass can shatter. Buildings can be damaged. Things we treasure can be lost. But the love of God cannot be broken, and His Word cannot fail. Scripture tells us that God is love, and that His love never fails. What people destroy, God is still able to redeem. What looks ruined in our eyes is never beyond His restoring hand. Even in a moment of violation and sadness, the truth of Christ's sacrifice remained, greater love still standing, still speaking, still whole. The cross itself is the ultimate proof that love is strongest where brokenness seems loudest. Perhaps that's the invitation for today: not to fix our eyes only on what has been shattered, but to notice what God has preserved. He always leaves a witness of His faithfulness, a fragment of hope that cannot be taken away. Even when circumstances feel scattered, the most important truth remains untouched - Christ's greater love for us.

The Revd Canon Mark Spiers

### TUESDAY

AS WE BEGIN A NEW DAY, IT'S EASY TO FEEL PULLED IN MANY DIRECTIONS BY THE NOISE, WORRIES, AND UNCERTAINTIES AROUND US. THIS MORNING'S DEVOTIONAL INVITES US TO PAUSE, BREATHE, AND GENTLY RE-CENTRE OUR HEARTS ON THE ONE WHO REMAINS CONSTANT THROUGH IT ALL.

17th February – Morning all, our headlines today remind us how mixed and uncertain our world can feel. Conflicts continue overseas even as peace talks are discussed, political changes unfold at home, economies shift, and culture moves forward in unexpected ways. But at the same time, there are hopeful notes, new opportunities in music and creativity, and familiar names returning to the high street - small signs that renewal and possibility still find a way through. If you pause for a moment, you may recognise this same mixture in your own life. Some things may feel uncertain or heavy. Decisions, responsibilities, or worries may sit quietly in the background of your thoughts. Yet alongside them are quieter gifts, breath in your lungs, strength for another day, moments of beauty you might easily overlook. And today's scripture speaks directly into that tension. "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6). Psalm 150 does something gentle but powerful. It lifts our eyes away from the noise and reminds us where the true centre is, not in politics, conflict, markets, or headlines, but in God Himself. The psalmist does not explain every problem; instead, he points to God's greatness. And when our focus shifts from what is unstable to the One who is unchanging, something inside us begins to steady. Remember this, you are held by a God who is still worthy of praise, still working quietly, still bringing hope where it seems unlikely. So, take that breath. You don't need perfect clarity or perfect strength. You only need a willing heart. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

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### WEDNESDAY

TODAY, ON ASH WEDNESDAY, WE STEP QUIETLY INTO A SEASON OF REFLECTION, REPENTANCE, AND RENEWAL. IT IS AN INVITATION TO PAUSE, TO REMEMBER OUR NEED OF GOD'S GRACE, AND TO DRAW NEAR WITH HUMBLE AND OPEN HEARTS AS WE BEGIN THIS 40 DAY JOURNEY OF LENT TOGETHER.

18th February – Morning all... This morning may have begun like any other - alarm clock, kettle boiling, messages waiting, responsibilities already pressing in. Yet Ash Wednesday interrupts the ordinary with a quiet, sacred pause. It invites us to slow down long enough to remember something we often try to forget; life is fragile, time is brief, and our hearts need God more than we realise.

“Remember that you are but dust,” the Church says - not to diminish our worth, but to remind us that our strength, success, and certainty were never meant to carry the weight of our souls. Only God can do that. Lent, beginning today, isn't a gloomy march towards guilt. It's a journey home. For forty days we walk a quieter road with Jesus, a road of reflection, surrender, and gentle honesty. We notice the distractions that fill our days but starve our spirits. We loosen our grip on habits that promise comfort yet leave us empty. We make space again for prayer, Scripture, silence, and mercy. And at the heart of this invitation, God speaks: “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” (Joel 2:12) This isn't about perfection. It's about returning. And the beautiful truth of Ash Wednesday is this: before we ever decide to return to God, He is already reaching toward us. So today, take one small step back toward Him. You don't need dramatic words. A quiet whisper is enough: “Lord, bring me home again.” And here is the promise that carries us from Ash Wednesday all the way to Easter: The God who formed us from dust is the same God who raises the dead to life. What begins today in ashes will end in resurrection.

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## THURSDAY

TODAY'S REFLECTION GENTLY EXPLORES ONE OF THE QUIETER, MORE CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF DISCIPLESHIP - THE SMALL, UNSEEN CHOICES WHERE FAITH RESHAPES OUR HEARTS. IT INVITES US TO CONSIDER HOW SURRENDER, THOUGH RARELY COMFORTABLE, CAN BECOME THE VERY PLACE WHERE WE ENCOUNTER THE STEADY PRESENCE OF CHRIST. HOPING FOR A QUIETER WEEKEND AFTER LAST WEEK! BE BLESSED.

19th February – Morning all... I used to think following Jesus would make life feel clearer, lighter, maybe even easier. Instead, I've found that it often asks me to let go of the very things I reach for to feel safe. Denying myself hasn't usually meant dramatic sacrifice. More often, it shows up in small, quiet moments that no one else sees, choosing patience when I want the last word, choosing kindness when I feel hurt, choosing trust when I would rather stay in control. And if I'm honest, that isn't comfortable. There's a real cost to laying down pride, certainty, and the illusion that I'm in charge of my own life. But there's also a strange beauty in it. Because every time I loosen my grip on something I thought I needed, I discover that Jesus is already there in the empty space, steady, gentle, enough. “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself.” (Luke 9:23) Lent has a way of revealing how tightly we hold on to habits, to recognition, to being right, to being secure. Not because God wants to take things from us, but because He wants to give us something deeper than comfort, He wants to give us Himself. And slowly, I'm learning this - self-denial in the way of Jesus is not about losing who you are. It's about being freed from everything that keeps us from becoming who we were made to be.

The Revd Canon Mark

## FRIDAY

MOST OF YOU KNOW THAT I WILL BE OFF TO NIGERIA A WEEK ON MONDAY, FOR A GATHERING OF SOME 400 ANGLICAN BISHOPS. IT HAS NOT BEEN EASY, JABS FOR YELLOW FEVER AND TYPHOID, ALL DONE, AND I NOW HAVE MY MALARIA TABLETS AND A RE-ISSUED VISA HAS ARRIVED. I NOTICED MY ORIGINAL VISA HAD THE WRONG PASSPORT NUMBER ON IT - THE AUTHORITIES MAY HAVE KEPT ME - SHAME, I HEAR YOU SAY!

20th February – Morning all,,, Just for a moment imagine slipping a small stone into your coat pocket after someone hurts you. You don't plan to keep it forever, it just feels right in the moment. It represents what happened. It reminds you that it mattered. Every now and then you reach into your pocket and feel it there. You replay the conversation. You think about what you wish you'd said. You imagine how it could have gone differently. Carrying it feels justified. Almost comforting. But days pass. Then weeks. You're still carrying it. You notice you're a little sharper than you used to be. A little more guarded. It takes less to irritate you. You don't even realise the stone is shaping how you walk, but it is. And the strange thing? The person who put it there may not even know you're still holding it. That's what unforgiveness does. It starts as something completely understandable. Of course it hurt. Of course it mattered. But the longer you grip it, the more it weighs on you. Lent brings you back to the cross, not to dismiss your pain, but to remind you of your own forgiveness. You stand there as someone who has been shown mercy you didn't earn. And in that quiet place, these words land differently: “Forgive, as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:13) Not because it was easy. Not because it was fair. But because you have been forgiven in exactly that way. Forgiveness isn't pretending the stone wasn't heavy. It's simply opening your hand and saying, “Lord, I don't want to carry this anymore.” And that, even if your hand trembles is the beginning of freedom.

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