

REVD MARK'S DAILY DEVOTIONALS #294 2ND – 6TH MARCH 2026

MONDAY

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL INVITES US TO REFLECT HONESTLY ON THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST, AND WHETHER WE ARE WILLING TO EMBRACE NOT JUST THE INSPIRATION OF DISCIPLESHIP, BUT THE SURRENDER IT TRULY REQUIRES.

2nd March – Morning all, if we're honest we all like the idea of following Jesus, until it costs something. It's easy to follow when it feels inspiring. When worship moves us. When prayers are answered. When faith neatly fits into our routines. But Jesus never hid the fine print. "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross." (Luke 9:23) That isn't decorative language. The cross wasn't jewellery in the first century. It was an instrument of death. When Jesus said those words, He was inviting people into a way of life that would cost them comfort, reputation, and control. And if we're honest, that's where we hesitate. We're living in a time where many of our young people are already carrying enormous pressure. The pressure to curate the perfect life online. To have the right body, the right opinions, the right image. To say the right thing at the right time or risk being publicly torn apart. One wrong post, one awkward video, one exposed mistake, and the pile-on can be brutal. So, when Jesus talks about denying ourselves, it hits differently. Because so much of modern life tells us to protect ourselves, promote ourselves, build our personal brand at all costs. To curate, filter, edit. But discipleship moves in the opposite direction. It asks: What if life isn't about building your own platform? What if it's about surrendering your need to be seen as impressive? What if the truest version of you isn't the one you've carefully constructed, but the one laid down in trust before God? For a teenager choosing integrity over popularity, that can cost friendships. For a young adult choosing forgiveness over retaliation, that can cost pride. For any of us choosing obedience over convenience, it can cost comfort. And yet, this is the strange paradox, the cross that looks like loss becomes the place of deepest freedom. Because denying ourselves isn't self-hatred. It's self-surrender. It's loosening our grip on the illusion that we are the centre of the story. Lent brings us face to face with this question: Am I following Jesus only where it fits my life, or am I willing to follow where it reshapes it? The cost is real. But so is the life on the other side of surrender.

Revd Canon Mark Spiers

TUESDAY

AS MY GRANDAD HAS NOW ARRIVED SAFELY IN ABUJA, NIGERIA, I (MATTHEW) WILL BE SENDING THE DEVOTIONALS THIS WEEK. I HAVE RECEIVED A FLURRY OF IMAGES FROM THE OPENING SERVICE AT THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF THE ADVENT, AND THEY LOOK IMPRESSIVE. THEY'LL ALL BE IN ST ANDREW'S NEWSLETTER THIS WEEKEND.

3rd March – Morning all... "Love your enemies." (Matthew 5:44) If we're honest, most of us would prefer a small footnote after that. Surely you don't mean that one? It's easy to love the agreeable, the people who are kind to us, who see things the way we do, who make life easier. That kind of love feels natural. But Jesus goes further. Loving enemies gets real very quickly. It's the colleague who smiles in person but chips away at your reputation behind the scenes. The person online who mocks your faith and seems to delight in misunderstanding you. Sometimes "enemy" isn't dramatic, it's just the person whose name makes your stomach tighten. And then sometimes it feels more tangible. Following the recent break-in at church and the news that a man has been arrested, it would be very easy to slip into anger. To feel protective. Violated. Frustrated. That's human. When somewhere sacred is damaged, it hurts. But right there in that space, Jesus' words meet us. Loving an enemy doesn't mean excusing what's wrong. It doesn't mean pretending damage doesn't matter. Justice matters. Consequences matter. Safety matters. But love means we refuse to let bitterness take root. It means we pray, however reluctantly, not just for our building, but for the man who broke in. For whatever chaos, addiction, desperation or hardness brought him to that door. Because if the gospel is only for the agreeable, it isn't really gospel at all. In a world that hardens quickly, loving an enemy keeps our hearts from becoming what hurt us. And perhaps we need to remember this: at some point, every one of us has needed mercy we didn't deserve.

Revd Canon Mark Spiers

WEDNESDAY

IF GETTING UP FOR WORK FEELS LIKE A BATTLE AND YESTERDAY'S MISTAKES HIT YOU BEFORE YOUR ALARM DOES, THEN WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT. THIS DEVOTIONAL REMINDS US WE ONLY NEED ENOUGH GRACE TO FACE TODAY, NOT THE WHOLE WEEK AT ONCE.

4th March – Morning all... The book of Lamentations 3:23 tells us, “His mercies are new every morning.” But if I’m honest, some mornings it doesn’t always feel that way and I certainly don’t wake up feeling full of faith. I wake up thinking about what I forgot to do, what I should have handled better, the conversation I wish I could rewind. And before I’ve even got out of bed, my mind is already rehearsing yesterday. And then I read this: *His mercies are new every morning.* I was recently speaking with someone who said to me, “I think I’ve used up my chances.” Years of battling addiction. Promises made sincerely and broken painfully. What stayed with me was this: they were still turning up. Still hoping. Even if hope felt fragile. And I realised how often I do the same thing in quieter ways. I carry yesterday into today as though God does too. I assume He’s as frustrated with my slow progress as I sometimes am. But Lamentations was written in the middle of devastation. Nothing looked hopeful. And yet in the rubble, the writer says God’s mercy is still arriving with the morning. That person said something simple that’s stayed with me: “I don’t need strength for the rest of my life. I just need it for today.” That should be our prayer too. So, this morning, whatever yesterday held, success, failure, regret, joy, it doesn’t get to define the tone of today.
Revd Canon Mark Spiers

THURSDAY

I ALWAYS SEEM TO BE IN A HURRY. NEXT TIME I STOP AT A RED LIGHT I'LL HAVE SOME MORE PATIENCE. I MUST'VE INHERITED MY IMPATIENCE FROM MY DAD!

5th March – Morning all... I noticed something this week while waiting at a set of traffic lights. Nobody likes waiting at them. The moment they turn red, people start inching forward. Engines rev slightly. Driver’s glance left and right as if the lights might change faster if we stare at them hard enough. We’re not very good at waiting. Lent, if we’re honest, feels a bit like a red-light season. To slow down, pause and pay attention. And most of us are quietly asking, can we move on yet? The prophet Amos spoke into a society that looked religious on the outside, festivals, worship gatherings, sacrifices, but underneath, something deeper was missing. People were going through the motions while justice and compassion had quietly drained away. So, God says through Amos: “Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.” (Amos 5:24) Not occasional goodness. Not something switched on for an hour on Sunday. A river, constant, moving, alive. Which raises a simple Lenten question for today: Where does kindness flow naturally from my life... and where has it dried up a little? Not as guilt. Just honesty. Because Lent isn’t really about dramatic spiritual gestures. Sometimes it’s simply about letting God turn our attention back to the quiet streams of everyday life, how we speak to people, how patient we are, how generous we become when no one is watching. Faith, Amos reminds us, isn’t meant to be a puddle. It’s meant to flow.
Revd Canon Mark Spiers

FRIDAY

PLEASE PRAY FOR TRAVELLING MERCIES AS BISHOP PAUL RETURNS HOME FROM NIGERIA TOMORROW AFTER A JAM-PACKED WEEK OF MEETINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND LOTS OF FELLOWSHIP.

6th March – Morning all... Jesus never hid the price of following Him. He never suggested faith would always be comfortable, popular, or easy. In fact, He often did the opposite. He told people to stop and think carefully about what discipleship might ask of them. “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost...?” (Luke 14:28) Count the cost. That feels very real when you look at the world around us at the moment. The news is full of tension, conflicts, political division, people arguing past each other rather than listening. Everyone seems encouraged to defend their position loudly and quickly. In that kind of environment, following Jesus can sometimes feel like swimming against the current. Choosing humility when everyone else is trying to win the argument. Choosing truth even when it costs approval. That kind of discipleship isn’t always easy. I’ve been thinking about that this week while my dad, Bishop Paul, has been in Nigeria at the GAFCON G26 gathering. For many people that’s just another church meeting somewhere in the world, but the reality is it represents something deeper, leaders from different countries coming together because they believe the gospel is worth standing for. Travelling across the world, giving time, energy, and voice to something bigger than comfort or convenience, that’s a quiet reminder that faith has always involved commitment. The church has never been built on what is easy. It has always been built by people who believe Christ is worth following, even when it costs something. And that brings us back to Jesus’ words. He wasn’t trying to discourage people from following Him. He was inviting them to understand the weight and value of it. Because faith isn’t just something we fit around life, it shapes life. Lent quietly asks us to revisit that question again: Am I willing to follow Jesus even when it costs something? Because every life is spent on something. And a life spent following Christ, however costly it may look at times, is never wasted.
Revd Canon Mark Spiers