

# LENT BIBLE STUDY

TWENTY-TWENTY-ONE

## ON-FIRE BUT NOT CONSUMED



### A LENT DEVOTIONAL AND STUDY OF THE TIMES

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## **FORWARD:**

Moses said, “I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn’t the bush burn up?”.( Exodus 3:2) This is the starting point for the salvation of the Jewish people and everything that comes after, including the giving of the Torah. God set the bush on fire to get Moses’s attention. The bush miraculously was on fire but was not consumed by the flames. This startling description of God as a “consuming fire” is found in both the old and new testaments of the Bible, the Word of God. The Corona Virus has shown us what a consuming fire can be like in this modern time. In the midst of a time of trauma, loss and struggle in this country and around the world due to the Tri-Pandemic, Christians have proved to be a “people of hope”. The multiple challenges and crises we are facing including hunger, poverty, domestic violence and climate change. The Church itself will emerge changed.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. We all look to find bible study, activities for families, inspiring stories and information about our faith for the observance of the Lenten seasons. The South Carolina Poor People's Campaign is inviting you this Lenten Season to focus on the Poor and Poverty impacted persons in your faith journey to Resurrection Sunday. It's time to stop and turn and see what is burning and yet not consumed in your community.

With each weekly bible study we will look at issues of Poverty through one or more of; Poor Peoples 14 Policy Priorities to heal the Nation, the foundational Principles of the Poor People Campaign, and section of the Poor Peoples Campaigns Jubilee Platform. These priorities, principles and platforms are a road map to healing and transforming our nation. They are a prescription to the diseases of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the distorted moral narrative of Christian nationalism that are plaguing the nation.

**ASH WEDNESDAY WED FEB 17 JONAH 3:1-4:11**  
**THE NEW POOR**

*JONAH 4:10 (MSG)*

God said, “What’s this? How is it that you can change your feelings from pleasure to anger overnight about a mere shade tree that you did nothing to get? You neither planted nor watered it. It grew up one night and died the next night. So, why can’t I likewise change what I feel about Nineveh from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than 120,000 childlike people who don’t yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?”



“Bitterness is like cancer. It eats upon the host. But anger is like fire. It burns it all clean.”

— **Maya Angelou**

We cannot allow anger to get the best of us. One of the things that COVID-19 has shown us is that we have a lot of preexisting conditions in our community that have to be dealt with in-order to experience life in abundance as Jesus came to bring. This year as you walk from the alter with Ash on your forehead know that there are some do not have anything to celebrate. The coronavirus (COVID-19) is a crisis like no other the world has faced in recent decades in terms of its potential economic and social impacts. We estimate that the pandemic could push about 49 million people into extreme poverty in 2020.

A large share of the new poor will be concentrated in countries that are already struggling with high poverty rates, but middle-income countries will also be significantly affected. Almost half of the projected new poor (23 million) will be in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an additional 16 million in South Asia. The number of extreme poor in the poorest countries that are served by the World Bank’s International Development Association is projected to increase by 17 million. At the same time, 22 million of the projected new poor will

be in middle-income countries. There are projected to be 10 million new extremely poor people in fragile and conflict-affected economies.

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*BIBLE QUESTION*

Read [Jonah 4:10](#). God says that Jonah was concerned about the vine. Why was Jonah concerned? Do you really think that Jonah is angry about the vine? Or, is he angry about the entire course of events and the vine was the "last straw?"

What about the last time you were angry with God, was it over something that could change the course of your life?

Why do you think God has to keep telling Jonah to think about the lives of the Ninevites? Isn't this something that should be obvious?

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*FOCUS QUESTION:*

How will you help/organized with the New Poor?

Let us pray:

*Thank you for cleansing us. Thank you for erasing my sin from your memory. As we minister to the world, deliver us from guilt and shame. Let the world hear us sing songs of thanksgiving and praise. Free us to shout hallelujah as our shattered spirits restart new life. Restore unto us the joy of your salvation. Restore unto us the joy of your salvation. Return to the world as ambassadors of Christ, living lives that please god. Begin and end your Lenten journey with love and patience. Remain confident of the sovereignty of our lord Jesus the Christ. Be renewed with the spirit of god as you go in peace.*  
*Amen*

**WED FEB 24**

**DEUTERONOMY 9:13-21**

**GOD'S PEOPLE**

*DEUTERONOMY 9:15 (MSG)*

I turned around and started down the mountain—by now the mountain was blazing with fire—carrying the two tablets of the covenant in my two arms. That’s when I saw it: There you were, sinning against God, your God—you had made yourselves a cast god in the shape of a calf! So soon you had left the road that God had commanded you to walk on. I held the two stone slabs high and threw them down, smashing them to bits as you watched.



"Indeed, a quick glance around this broken world makes it painfully obvious that we don't need more arguments on behalf of God; we need more people who live as if they are in covenant with Unconditional Love, which is our best definition of God. (p. 21)" — **Robin R.**

**Meyers (Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus)**

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Another of the 14 Policy Priorities is to ensure all of the rights of indigenous people. Protecting the rights and sovereignty of First Nations, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, including the free expression of religion, sacred lands and practices. This includes protecting Oak Flats, the sacred lands of the Apache people in Arizona, from being destroyed and the water source contaminated by the extractive mining company, Resolution Copper. This devastation will prevent the Apache Stronghold from exercising their right to the free expression of their religion and must be stopped immediately. There is emerging evidence that many disadvantaged communities in the United States are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Native American communities share some of the characteristics of other disadvantaged communities that might make them susceptible to greater impacts, but they also face unique challenges. Difficulties inherent in studying small population groups as well as differences in access to testing for COVID-19 present challenges to understanding the full impact of the epidemic on these communities. However, PPC has shown that there are indications that some Native American populations are facing a disproportionate brunt of the COVID-19 epidemic with higher infection and mortality rates than the overall U.S. population.



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*BIBLE QUESTION*

According to Deuteronomy 9:4–5, why were the seven nations disposed of the land?

What does Moses remind the people of in Deuteronomy 9:14?

Why was Moses afraid in Deuteronomy 9:19?

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*FOCUS QUESTION:*

How have you reached out to support First Nation and Native Americans during the current time of suffering?

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*LET US PRAY:*

*The Great Spirit is in all things, He is in the air we breathe.*

*The Great Spirit is our Father, but the Earth is our Mother.*

*She nourishes us, that which we put into the ground, She returns to us... Amen*

WED MARCH 3 JEREMIAH 3:6-18

COME BACK

*JEREMIAH 3:13 (MSG)*

“Turn back, fickle Israel. I’m not just hanging back to punish you. I’m committed in love to you. My anger doesn’t see the nonstop. Just admit your guilt. Admit your God-defiance. Admit to your promiscuous life with casual partners, pulling strangers into the sex-and-religion groves while turning a deaf ear to me.” God’s Decree. “Come back, wandering children!” God’s Decree. “I, yes I, am your true husband. I’ll pick you out one by one— this one from the city, these two from the country— and bring you to Zion. I’ll give you good shepherd-rulers who rule my way, who rule you with intelligence and wisdom.



"Destiny is the push of our instincts to the pull of our purpose. That push-pull is what keeps the sun, moon, and stars from crashing. It causes the seasons to change from planting to growing to harvest to dormancy. If that divine push-pull, known as gravity, accurately sets the galaxies and the seasons in motion, will the same principle—the push of instinct and the pull of purpose—not set your life in the right motion?"

— **T.D. Jakes** (**Destiny: Step into Your Purpose**)

In Jeremiah’s view, nothing short of moral reformation and spiritual renewal could deliver them from the coming judgment. Persistent covenant violation would result in the outlined curses of Deuteronomy 28— namely, exile from the land and expulsion from God’s presence. They couldn’t tie God’s hands in the matter. If the temple became a refuge to flee to so they could feel safe in their

idolatry and sin (the meaning behind the phrase “den of robbers”), God would destroy it. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was clear when he said in 1967 that we must be “compelled to see war as an enemy of the poor and attack it as such.” The first victims are the poor of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any number of countries decimated by US intervention. Over half a million people have been killed in US wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2001, and many of the resources that belong to their populations collectively are being extracted and sold off by US-based oil companies. In addition, Americans recruited by the “poverty draft” have to go abroad to fight and kill and come home scarred and broken, if we come home at all. On average 20 of these veterans commit suicide every day. Meanwhile, we watch our tax dollars get drained away for violence instead of being allocated to basic needs. The wars the United States and its allies wage are wars of the rich against the poor.

The wars waged by the wealthy are for the benefit of the wealthy, many of whom make tremendous profits from war. Out of the top five most profitable military contractors, four are US companies. Together, those four companies received \$117.9 billion in military contracts in 2018, and their CEOs receive tens of millions of dollars a year. A Poor People’s Resistance to War is an orientation toward war from a perspective based on the principles of the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. We, the poor, forced through our dispossession to work or enlist in the military in order to survive, take this orientation toward war. Wars are fought in the interest of the wealthy, for the gain of the wealthy. War’s primary victims are the poor of the countries that are invaded and the poor of the US. Children are especially vulnerable.

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*BIBLE QUESTION*

Was the breach irreparable?

Was the relationship irreconcilable?

Had Israel, to use language from chapter three, backslid so far past the point of no return that any previous promises that God had made towards them or any future plans that God had for them were annulled?

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*FOCUS QUESTION:*

How will you resist all coercive measures of aggression against the world's poor and recognize the organic relationship between endless military campaigns abroad and racialized, military-style state violence at home?

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*LET US PRAY:*

*Hear us, God. We have taken the power of the persecution and crucifixion of the Lamb for granted. We have dropped the ball with the praise we don't give, the love we don't share with others and what we don't forgive. We have tried to use God instead of allowing God to use us. This is repenting hour. We commit to redirect our will in alignment with the will of the Great I Am. In the matchless name of Jesus, we pray for forgiveness and pardon. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY      MARCH 10      JEREMIAH 8:18-9:6

I'M HEARTBROKEN

*JEREMIAH 8:18 (MSG)*

I drown in grief. I'm heartsick. Oh, listen! Please listen! It's the cry of my dear people reverberating through the country. Is God no longer in Zion? Has the King gone away? Can you tell me why they flaunt their plaything-gods, their silly, imported no-gods before me? The crops are in, the summer is over, but for us nothing's changed. We're still waiting to be rescued. For my dear broken people, I'm heartbroken. I weep, seized by grief. Are there no healing ointments in Gilead? Isn't there a doctor in the house? So why something can't be done to heal and save my dear, dear people?



"There is no balm in Gilead, but there is balm in God. There is no physician among the creatures, but the Creator is Jehovah-rophi."

— Charles Haddon Spurgeon (Morning and Evening, Based on the English Standard Version)

“The numbers of people suffering in this the richest nation in the world is already increasing and deepening as the effects of the pandemic, recession and racist and anti-poor policies continue to hurt poor and low-income people the hardest,” said Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice and co-chair of the Poor People’s Campaign. Poor and impacted people will come together to tell the nation what it means to not have enough food to eat, to wonder how to keep a roof over your family’s head, and to have to choose between risking your life by going to work or staying at home and not getting paid. We will share the bold and visionary demands people are putting forth that can solve these grave injustices and the powerful and creative resistance

of people organizing across the country. History shows that when those most impacted by injustice come together in a powerful movement, that this country can indeed change for the better. Those whose backs are against the wall are pushing this whole nation towards justice today. "We must break through the lie that some lives are more precious than others, that it's impossible to unite and organize for change, or that the rich and powerful are coming to save us." - Liz Theoharis

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### *BIBLE QUESTION*

Who is really talking in this passage? Who is weeping? Is it Jeremiah? Is it God? Or is it both?

In a time of distress and upheaval, leaders are often faced with a question –In this passage, we clearly see on which side of that equation Jeremiah came down. How do you respond to such leadership? When you look to those who lead, what brings you hope and gives you the strength to carry on in tumultuous times?

The balm of “Gilead” has become a commonplace metaphor for hope and healing, despite the fact that few, if any, of us have any connection whatsoever to this place. Are there other metaphors that serve this purpose in your life – places, people, communities, etc that serve as beacons of hope and healing for you today?

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### *FOCUS QUESTIONS:*

I wonder what are the best ways to love others? I wonder what the best ways are to love God. I wonder if you have ever felt left out of God's love?

*LET US PRAY:*

*Lord, empty us of all the things that diminish our lives so that we can be filled with your love and embrace the joy and happiness of a life lived in you; in Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.*

**WED MARCH 17**

**JEREMIAH 18:1-11**

**CALLED FOR FIRE**

*JEREMIAH 18:5 (MSG)*

Then God's Message came to me: "Can't I do just as this potter does, people of Israel?" God's Decree! "Watch this potter. In the same way that this potter works his clay, I work on you, people of Israel. At any moment I may decide to pull up a people or a country by the roots and get rid of them. But if they repent of their wicked lives, I will think twice and start over with them. At another time I might decide to plant a people or country, but if they don't cooperate and won't listen to me, I will think again and give up on the plans I had for them.



"Our greatest power doesn't always emerge from our experiences, not even from our most intense ones. There's incredible hidden treasure locked up in your instincts that may not always show on your résumé. If you can spend some time with yourself, you may be on the verge of the most powerful part of your life, discovering what's inside that your instincts want to express outside. Think about what you gravitate toward when given time to relax and recharge." — **T.D. Jakes (Instinct: The Power to Unleash Your Inborn Drive)**

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The initiative is led by the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, which recently held a digital justice poor people's assembly that attracted more than 2.5 million viewers on Facebook alone, and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, based in Chicago. On the 168th anniversary of Frederick Douglass' famous speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July," clergy from around the country called for fire and thunder at a time when the nation's promises of political freedom and equal justice are once again under attack from within. On that Saturday and Sunday, clergy from across the country delivered sermons based on Frederick Douglass' speech on July 5, 1852, titled "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" The clergy will urge their congressional representatives and senators to listen to their sermons and address systemic racism and issue a call to support the Poor People's Moral Justice Jubilee Policy Platform. It's the first comprehensive legislative agenda since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the unrest sparked by the George Floyd lynching's, designed to heal the country from the three pandemics of systemic racism, poverty and the pandemic. The day of sermons was followed by a briefing for Congress on the specific policy demands.



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*BIBLE QUESTION*

What was the potter doing as Jeremiah watched in verses three and four of this book? (Jeremiah 18:3-4)

How did God liken His power over the nations to the decisions of the potter in these verses? (Jeremiah 18:5-10)

What unthinkable deed had Judah done against God, according to these verses? (Jeremiah 18:13-15)

Where did the people of Judah begin to walk when they left God's ways and began to worship idols in verse fifteen? (Jeremiah 18:15)

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*FOCUS QUESTION:*

What sermon keeps you grounded in the movement for Justice?

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*LET US PRAY:*

*Precious Lord, strip away the mask I wear during the week to "get by". Lay my soul bare before you today. Let me see genuine love. Show me the love that hates evil and holds onto to what is good. Strip away the mask that holds my emotion in check when I should share your love with someone. Let me see the joy of giving to others. Show me the power of blessing those who persecute me. Strip away the mask that grins and lies and lets the world think otherwise about a child of God. Amen*

WED MARCH 24

JEREMIAH 25:30-38

PREACH TO ALL PEOPLE

JEREMIAH 25:30 (MSG)

“Preach it all, *Jeremiah*. Preach the entire Message to them. Say: “God roars like a lion from high heaven; thunder rolls out from his holy dwelling— Ear-splitting bellows against his people, shouting hurrahs like workers in harvest. The noise reverberates all over the earth; everyone everywhere hears it. God makes his case against the godless nations. He’s about to put the human race on trial. For the wicked the verdict is clear-cut: death by the sword.” God’s Decree.



"In any case, white people, who had robbed black people of their liberty and who profited by this theft every hour that they lived, had no moral ground on which to stand. They had the judges, the juries, the shotguns, the law—in a word, power. But it was a criminal power, to be feared but not respected, and to be outwitted in any way whatever. And those virtues preached but not practiced by the white world were merely another means of holding Negroes in subjection."

— **James Baldwin** (**The Fire Next Time**)

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On Thanksgiving day one year ago, former chair of the San Carlos Apache, Wendsler Nosie Sr, began his return to the Apache holy site of Oak Flat (Chi'chil Bildagoteel). In the Apache tradition, the waters at Oak Flat are the source of all life. Generations of Apache have come to pray for thousands of years at this most holy site.

Resolution Copper's proposed extraction will use 6.5 billion gallons of water annually - as much water as a small city - which would then be polluted with sulfuric acid, to process the copper ore thousands of feet below the surface. These operations would replace the holy ground with a gaping crater, two miles wide and a thousand feet deep. The threat has just grown more urgent, as the federal government recently certified the project's Environmental Impact Statement which would allow the company to mine on what is currently public land. While the environmental impact of this extraction will be devastating, this is also an encroachment on the religious liberty of the Apache people. Wendsler Nosie Sr. says, "To defend the land is a must. We are in a crucial period; it is going to take everything we can give to stop this land exchange."

The Poor People's Campaign now calls on all of the people in our movement to support our brothers and sisters in the Apache Stronghold in their struggle for religious freedom and the right to their sacred lands at Oak Flat.

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### *BIBLE QUESTION*

What was God's answer to any nation that refused the cup from Jeremiah, according to these verses? (Jeremiah 25:27-29)

What images did Jeremiah use to convey the coming of God's great wrath in verses thirty and thirty-one? (Jeremiah 25:30-31)

How did Jeremiah describe the magnitude of the destruction he foresaw in verses thirty-two and thirty-three? (Jeremiah 25:32-33)

What would become of all the leaders who did not fear God, according to these verses? (Jeremiah 25:34-38)

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**FOCUS QUESTION:**

How do you think the treatment of our Native brothers and sisters are viewed by God?

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**LET US PRAY:**

*O God of justice, miracles and mighty deeds, we lift up to you those who have been silenced by hardship, affliction and injustice. Forgive us for not speaking up for the least among us. We confess that we have not exercised our influence and position to change things. Grant us the courage to be agents of change and instruments of justice. Empower us with the will and the desire to see your kingdom manifest on earth as it is already done in heaven. In Jesus' Name we pray,  
Amen.*

## DISCLAIMER

Thank you for spending this time with Rev. Amiri B. Hooker and the members of Wesley Chapel this document was intended for local church reading and thus there are no citations for the source of the text and writing. The highlighted quotes used in this document come from Goodreads. Goodreads is the world's largest site for readers and book recommendations. Their mission is to help people find and share books they love. Goodreads launched in January 2007. The additional information comes from the Poor People's Campaign websites and press releases. The narrative information also borrowed from on the power of religions and human rights, the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice Works to rise up generations of religious and community leaders committed to the unity and organization of the poor as the leading social force in the building of a broad transformative movement to end poverty.



This work has been organized for devotion by Reverend Amiri B. Hooker serves as senior pastor of Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church in Lake City, South Carolina. Reverend Hooker has prophetically served churches with a passion towards community organizer and social justice advocating. He is one of the Tri-Chairs in the South Carolina Division Poor People's Campaign working to build a broad, fusion movement that can unite poor and impacted communities across the state and target issues of voter engagement.