

### **Wednesday, March 19: Rise Up**

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<https://open.spotify.com/track/0tV8pOpiNsKqUys0ilUcXz?autoplay=true>

*You're broken down and tired  
Of living life on a merry go round  
And you can't find the fighter...*

*When the silence isn't quiet  
And it feels like it's getting hard to breathe  
And I know you feel like dying*

How many of us can relate to those lyrics? Life is brutal. It certainly is not fair. And oftentimes it is just plain exhausting, and maybe even debilitating. I remember over four and a half years ago: I was recovering in the ICU at Duke Hospital from being shot in a drive-by-shooting. In the weeks and months following that wrong place, wrong time shooting, I did feel like dying and I did experience what it felt like when it got hard to breathe. I learned in the deepest sense that the feeling of “silence not being quiet” and the fear and constant replaying of the terrifying night in my broken and damaged soul. It was in those holy, haunting, and sacred moments that I clung to the hope of a savior who had come to this Earth, was broken and defeated, and claimed victory over it all. It was in those moments of relearning how to walk and how to get out of a chair that I was surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, the faithful people who had built up a community around me despite being in the first six months of COVID. It was not until I lived in the valley of the shadow of death and felt like literal dust that I recognized that I was not alone, not even for a second. God and God’s people have a tendency to show up in the darkest and most exhausting of circumstances. And they certainly did. And they certainly will.

The season of Lent brings a lot of emotions, feelings, and responses. Maybe you “feel like you are a plastic bag, drifting though the wind, wanting to start again”...or maybe another not so-Christian way of explaining the Lenten season comes from the infamous Rocky Balboa, who stated so clearly, “The world ain’t all sunshine and rainbows. It is a very mean and nasty place, and it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it.” The season of Lent echoes these statements, but the season of Lent is not where the story ends. Although Lent may leave us on our knees, the promise keeper, way-maker, eternal redeemer, does not leave us there. In fact, just like all difficult seasons in our life, it ends. And what replaces it...well, we will cling to the hope and promise that it is better than where we were. But praise be, we do not have to do this alone. The Body of Christ is in this season together. Just as the Body surrounded me four and half years ago, the Body is surrounding us in this journey. For as Andra Day finishes in her song:

*“And we'll rise up  
High like the waves  
We'll rise up  
In spite of the ache  
We'll rise up  
And we'll do it a thousand times again”*

As we journey this Lenten Road together, know, friends, that we will rise up together. We can rely on Christ who walks the road to Calvary for you and for me, and who never leaves us to walk that road alone. We can rise up out of our dust in spite of the ache, not by our own doing, but by the love, grace, and mercy of our Redeemer. For Jesus will do it a thousand times again, for you and for me; so, take heart my friends. **Amen.**