



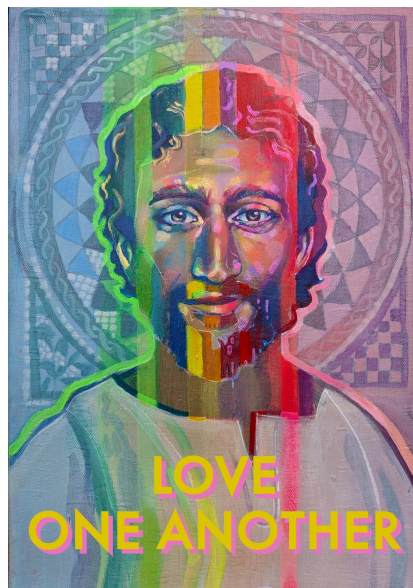
Prayerful Reflections

A Daily Devotional for Lent 2025

Read, Reflect, Respond and Rest in the Love of God

Edited by Rev. Julia Styles

Prayerful Reflections: A Daily Devotional for Lent 2025
Read, Reflect, Respond and Rest in the Love of God
Edited by Rev. Julia Styles
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Cover Art by Emily John Garcés, *Jesus Painting*, 2025

Emily is an artist, writer, and all-round creative enthusiast. She will put her hand to anything and has spent the past few years wielding power tools, renovating an old Derbyshire mill. She wrote the memoir, [Hitchhiking with Drunken Nuns](#), about her time as a missionary in South America, and published a collection of poetry and artwork called, [The Quiet Woman](#), despite being anything but. She co-hosts the international podcast, [50 Words for Snow](#). See more of her art here: <https://thexbo.com/>

If you would like to purchase a copy of the *Jesus Painting* by Emily John Garcés, email spiritualdirectionwithjulia@gmail.com before March 15, 2025 for more details.

Introduction

Prayerful Reflections is a daily resource for connecting with God and the larger Christian community during the season of Lent, the 45 days prior to Easter. Christians around the world practice Lent as a way to meditate/reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how Jesus influences our lives today.

Inspired by the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*, or sacred listening, each daily reflection will be an opportunity to **Read** the Bible, **Reflect** on the message, **Respond** to what we have heard, **and Rest** in the love of God. This devotional could be read independently or with a community. If you would like to connect virtually, the reflections are posted daily at www.spiritualdirectionwithjulia.com/blog with opportunities to comment.

You are welcome to share this free resource with anyone you like, just send them the link www.spiritualdirectionwithjulia.com/prayerful-reflections and they will be able to download a free PDF version of *Prayerful Reflections: A Daily Devotional for Lent 2025*.

I started publishing *Prayerful Reflections* in 2021 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the new reality of socially-distanced churches. An online devotional seemed like the appropriate way for Christians from around the world to connect in their shared identity in Christ, especially during Lent and Advent. I also published *Prayerful Reflections* out of a deep yearning to share my thoughts about God and to amplify the voices of female theologians. You will notice that all 40 authors presented in this devotional are women. Jesus called women to proclaim the Good News to the world, not just to women or children, but also to men. So although this devotional is written by all women, it is meant for ALL people.

The theologies and interpretations of scripture held in these pages are valuable and worth reading. The women represented in *Prayerful Reflections* are pastors, chaplains, authors, spiritual directors, teachers, parents and community leaders. We range in age, ethnicity, race, denominational background, political and theological stances, and are from varied locations across North America. What do we have in common? We all follow Jesus and have been prompted by the Holy Spirit to share the insight God has given us through scripture. I want to thank all of the women who made this volume of *Prayerful Reflections* possible; your time, thought, prayers and insight are invaluable.

-Rev. Julia L. Styles

Table of Contents

Introduction to Prayerful Reflections: Lent 2025 by Julia Styles	2
Walk Your Talk: A Reflection for Ash Wednesday by Susan Schaefer	5
The Ultimate Security System: A Reflection for Thursday, March 6th by Seanna Wong	8
Remembering the Stories of Our Childhood: A Reflection for Friday, March 7 by Rev. Mary Peterson	11
Call on God for All Things at All Times: A Reflection for Saturday, March 8 by Rev. Julie Jane Capel	13
Everyone Who Calls, 'Help, God!' Gets help.: A Reflection for Sunday, March 9 by Rev. Julia Styles	16
After God's Own Heart: A Reflection for Monday, March 10 by Samantha Wade	19
The Cry of our Heart: A Reflection for Tuesday, March 11 by Pastor Katherine Mayer	21
Alert at All Times: A Reflection for Wednesday, March 12 by Alex Hofmann Macias	23
What Really Matters: A Reflection for Thursday, March 13 by Rev. Oreon K. Trickey	26
Who Do You Model Your Life after?: A Reflection for Friday, March 14 by Ruth Jensen Zschoche	28
The Lord is my Light: A Reflection for Saturday, March 15 by Rev. Beth Knight	30
Light in the Shadows: Finding Courage in Uncertainty: A Reflection for Sunday, March 16 by Klamesha P. Richards	33
Who Are You Calling Stiff-Necked?: A Reflection for Monday, March 17 by Rev. Joy Fishler	35
Cultivate God-Confidence: A Reflection for Tuesday, March 18 by Rev. Alicia Vela Anderson	37
The Narrow Door: A Reflection for Wednesday, March 19 by Rev. Charlene Rotvold	40
Drawing From Your Reserves: A Reflection for Thursday, March 20 by Jennifer Andersson	43
Practicing Lectio Divina: A Reflection for Friday, March 21 by Carole DuBois	45
Harvesting Good Fruit: Speaking Truth to Your Values: A Reflection for Saturday, March 22 By Rev. Dr. Elrica Adams-Finney	47
One of These Things is not Like the Other: A Reflection for Sunday, March 23 By Rev. Corenna Boucher Hoyt	49
Selah: A Reflection for Monday, March 24 by Jeanne Barnes	52
Action Changes Things (ACT): A Reflection for Tuesday, March 25 by Rev. Alka Lyall	55
Small but Mighty: A Reflection for Wednesday, March 26 by Mary Rodriguez	57
Looking Forward to our Heavenly House: A Reflection for Thursday, March 27 by Rev. Elizabeth Jones	59
Compelled by Christ: A Reflection for Friday, March 28 by Cindy M. Wu	61
The Need for an Intercessor: A Reflection for Saturday, March 29 by Sandy De Jesus	63

Taste and See God's Goodness: A Reflection for Sunday, March 30 by Rebekah Bolin	66
I Wish I Had Time For That: A Reflection for Monday, March 31 by Rev. Joy Fishler	68
We are Called to be People of Jubilee: A Reflection for Tuesday, April 1 by Sarah Roquemore Day	71
God is Still God: A Reflection for Wednesday, April 2 by Jillian Evans	75
To Whom You Belong: A Reflection for Thursday, April 3 by Seanna Wong	77
Voices: A Reflection for Friday, April 4 by Melanie Marie Myatt	81
Lost but Found – God Restores: A Reflection for Saturday, April 5 by Rev. Dr. Cynthia P. Stewart	83
A Way in the Wilderness: A Reflection Sunday, April 6 by Esther Knicely Baine	85
Hang On, It's A Wild Ride: A Reflection for Monday, April 7 by Jeannette Conver	88
The Lord Hears Our Cry: A Reflection for Tuesday, April 8 by Natasha Westerhoud	90
Invitation to Pay Attention A Reflection for Wednesday, April 9 by Rev. Beth Knight, MAPC	92
In Times of Distress: A Reflection for Thursday, April 10 by Eileen Lundy	94
Suffering and the Human Experience: A Reflection for Friday, April 11 by Rev. Julia Styles	97
Betrayal By Any Other Name: A Reflection for Saturday, April 12 by Rev. Bronwyn Leigh Murphy	100
Our Cornerstone: A Reflection for Palm Sunday, April 13 by Melanie Marie Myatt	102
Death Smells: A Reflection for Holy Monday, April 14 by Rev. Jo Anne Taylor	104
Trusting in God: A Reflection for Holy Tuesday, April 15, 2025, by Sandra Zamble'	107
Keeping Our Focus on Jesus: A reflection for Holy Wednesday, April 16 by Rev. Ieisha Hawley	110
A Holy Roar: A Reflection for Maundy Thursday April 17 By Kim Delp	112
The nature of power: A Reflection for Good Friday, April 18, by Rev. Dr. Laura Truax	115
Holy Saturday: A Reflection for Holy Saturday, April 19 by Eileen Lundy	117
Rising From The Ashes: A Reflection for Easter Sunday, April 20 by Rev. Alicia Reese	120

Walk Your Talk

A Reflection for Ash Wednesday by Susan Schaefer

Lectionary reading for March 5, 2025: [Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Read

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

But whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they **mark their faces to show others** that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Reflect

I never truly appreciated Ash Wednesday until I experienced Mardi Gras in New Orleans. If Mardi Gras is about sin and celebration, Ash Wednesday is about repentance and reflection. Speaking from personal experience, I can testify that I longed for Ash Wednesday after six weeks of excessive celebration.

Ash Wednesday is the doorway into Lent. It begins with repentance. When we repent on Ash Wednesday, we are, in the original language, changing direction: sometimes in the literal sense of changing actions; more often in the mental sense of changing our minds. We move from self-centeredness to God-consciousness. We follow Jesus and take on the mind of Christ.

The disciples followed Jesus up a mountain to listen to his teachings, what we call the Sermon on the Mount. They did not yet know who or what he was- a rabbi? a sage?

They were puzzled and perhaps a little distressed by what they heard. I can imagine their dialogue. "Are we really blessed when people revile and persecute us? Do we *have* to love our enemies? Do we have to give to *everyone* who begs from us? Jesus, we could never follow the Law the way you teach it. There's no way we can be as perfect as our Father in heaven is. We are tired and confused. You have told us that we should let our light shine before others, so that they might see our good works. Now you are telling us to beware of piety?"

I'm as confused as the disciples probably were. When do I let my good works shine and when do I keep them anonymous?

The Oxford dictionary defines piety as "habitual reverence and obedience to God." Good Christian behavior, right? So why beware?

Because the focus of the verse is on piety *before others*. We need not beware of piety, but of hypocrisy, which comes from a Greek word meaning "the acting of a theatrical part." We should beware of *acting* like a Christian rather than *being* a Christian. We should fear our *self*-righteousness, not our righteousness.

I love Eugene Peterson's use of theatrical imagery in his translation: "When you practice a discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity, but it won't make you a saint." (Matthew 6:16-18, *The Message*)

Here's a modern-day example of *acting* like, rather than *being* like Christians: During one Mardi Gras, I saw a church on the parade route with a big billboard that self-righteously declared that Christians should not celebrate Mardi Gras. The church's members gathered just outside of their church wearing Sunday clothes and dour expressions, while praying for the sinners on the sidewalks. In contrast, I could imagine Jesus mingling joyfully (not sinfully) with the celebrating crowds, and turning to tell the praying Christians to "beware of practicing their piety before others."

I'll leave you with a question about hypocrisy using another Mardi Gras/Ash Wednesday example: On Mardi Gras day, the treasures on earth that people covet are plastic necklaces and doubloons. They are worth less than a dollar, and they aren't good for the environment, but you would never know that on Fat Tuesday. On that day, it would not be unusual to see a male vice president of a local bank, dressed as an old woman with curlers in her hair, wearing a housecoat and slippers. He is holding a Dixie beer in one hand and waving madly with the other

at the elaborately decorated floats driving by him, and shouting, “Trow me somethin’, mistah!” The next day, the same vice president would show up at his bank, sober, wearing his Brooks Brothers suit and tie, along with a mark of ashes in the shape of a cross on his forehead. He had been to mass that morning before work.

Is he being a hypocrite by wearing the mark on his face all throughout Ash Wednesday?

My answer: It depends.

Respond

Think about the Ash Wednesday practice of repentance. What are you doing or thinking that has you walking in the wrong direction? Consider confessing, asking for and accepting forgiveness, and thinking about what change you wish to make. Perhaps Lent would be a good time to make that change.

Think about how you express your faith to others. How might you “walk your talk?”

Rest

Gracious and Loving God, thank you for this Ash Wednesday. Be with me today as I reflect upon my life. Help me to turn away from any thing or any thought that is blinding me from awareness of Your presence, and from awareness of all that is true, noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy. May I be authentically me as I express my faith through the lens of Your love. Amen

About the Author



Susan Schaefer, DMin, is ordained by LaSalle Street Church and endorsed by the Federation of Christian Ministries to a Ministry of Philanthropy and Service. She and her son, Ash, find purpose and joy in researching and donating to non-profit organizations in the Chicago area that help those in need, and that work towards social justice. As of this writing, she is discerning which Lenten practice to choose that will be life-giving and will deepen her relationship with God.

The Ultimate Security System

A Reflection for Thursday, March 6 by Seanna Wong

Lectionary reading for 03/06/2025: [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16](#); [Exodus 5:10-23](#); [Acts 7:30-34](#);

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16.

Read

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 NLT

1 Those who live in the shelter of the Most High

will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

2 This I declare about the Lord:

9 He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.

If you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter,

10 no evil will conquer you;

no plague will come near your home.

11 For he will order his angels

to protect you wherever you go.

12 They will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.

13 You will trample upon lions and cobras; you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!

14 The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me.

I will protect those who trust in my name.

15 When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble.

I will rescue and honor them.

16 I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation."

Reflect

A few months ago, I experienced a safety concern in my apartment building. Anxiously, I researched the best cameras and locks and purchased each one. I monitored every notification from the devices' apps, believing that would bring reassurance—when in reality, they only fueled my obsession with safety.

Again and again, I asked myself: *Am I safe here? What else could I buy to make me safer? What should I have had earlier to prevent this? Where would I go if it happened again?*

Often, we think of safety as something we can create—locked doors, security systems, backup plans. But safety, as we define it, is more assumed than guaranteed. We trust a locked door, forgetting it can be picked. We close a window, not considering it can be shattered. This illusion disappears in moments of crisis—natural disasters, accidents, pandemics. Suddenly, the fences we built and the protections we put in place feel fragile, exposing how little control we truly have.

And so, we return to the same questions: *What could I have done differently? What should I buy, replace, or stock up on to prevent this? And ultimately, when all else fails—where would I go? Where can I truly find safety?*

Psalm 91 gives us an answer.

This psalm is more than a comforting passage—it is a declaration of divine security. I read it as the greatest security system, out matching Brinks, ADT, and Blink. The psalmist doesn't promise a life free from hardship; rather, they acknowledge that dangers—painful events, hard cutting places, and devouring forces—will come. Yet, these forces cannot overcome us because of the Lord's unmatched power and presence.

The invitation of Psalm 91 is not to seek out better security measures, but to recognize that God Himself is our ultimate refuge. His protection is not like the temporary, human-made barriers we rely on—it is unshakable. His presence is not limited to a single location—it is everywhere, at all times, forever.

Neither evil, nor destruction, nor uncertainty can stand against our God, who has dispatched heavenly beings as our in-home, roadside, and everywhere-else assistance.

In verses 14-16, God speaks as a loving Father, promising that those who seek Him will find His presence and protection—not because of their own efforts, but because of His faithfulness. He does not guarantee a life without trouble—but as John 16:33 states, we should “take heart”—because God promises to be with us in the midst of all trouble and all pain. He takes the painful events, the hard, cutting places, and the forces that seem their only purpose is to overwhelm us, these things we thought would break us, and He transforms them into opportunities to reveal just how completely He rescues, how faithfully He honors, and how justly He vindicates.

Psalm 91 is both a map and a treasure, a bunker and a lifeline, a distress call and a lullaby, a deed and an inheritance. It poses a question: *Where will you run when calamity comes calling? Under whose shadow will you hide?*

Psalm 91 declares there is only one shadow worth finding safety in and His name has never changed.

Respond

Have you found yourself running to people or things for safety and peace of mind? It's an easy habit to fall into. But the security they offer is ephemeral and never truly fulfilling in times of distress.

I invite you to bring to mind the thing, situation, or worst-case scenario you've been toiling over—the one you've told yourself must be fixed, handled, resolved, or situated before you can finally feel safe, secure, and at peace. Envision that burden in your hands, and now picture

yourself placing it into the hands of the Almighty. You can lay it at His feet or rest it in the shadow of His presence, however you imagine it.

Now, with even the smallest measure of faith—a splinter, a slab, or anything in between—entrust it to God, your only perfect and complete source of security. And when feelings of doubt or anxiety begin to sprout around that burden, I encourage you to turn to Psalm 91—whether in its entirety or just a few verses that pull at your own personal faith strings. Use scripture to take those thoughts captive and replace fear, doubt, worry, or anxiety with trust that God’s word will never fall to the ground.

Rest

Lord, Thank you for the lamp your word is to dark and unsettling places, and for the reminder of your presence with us in those places, too.

Father, let us encounter your character described and voiced throughout Psalm 91. Let us experience it and testify of its truth so we may give you glory. Holy Spirit, please keep our hearts attuned to your voice. Remind us to cry out to you in times of trouble, and open our ears to hear you speak. Help us to stay hidden under your shadow, Lord. Let our attention not stray from making you our dwelling, and even when we do find ourselves wandering, rescue us into your loving arms.

*Thank you for your faithfulness, eternal and living God, and your name be praised
In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

About the Author

Seanna Wong, M.B.A., is a Miami, Florida native who writes on faith, womanhood, and identity in a clamoring world. She’s known Psalm 91 as a distress cry and lullaby, and has seen its efficacy. When she’s not working, writing – or avoiding either the two – Seanna is either reading or working on her cooking vlog. You can read more of Seanna’s work here: <https://medium.com/@seannawrites>.



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Remembering the Stories of Our Childhood

A Reflection for Friday, March 7 by Rev. Mary Peterson

Lectionary Readings for March 7, 2025: [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16](#); [Exodus 6:1-13](#); [Acts 7:35-42](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Acts 7:30-42

Read

Acts 7:33-34 *The Message*

“God said, ‘Kneel and pray. You are in a holy place, on holy ground. I’ve seen the agony of my people in Egypt. I’ve heard their groans. I’ve come to help them. So get yourself ready; I’m sending you back to Egypt.’

Reflect

I remember hearing the story of the burning bush multiple times as a kid. Whether it was flannel shapes or reenactments with red and orange lights glowing in a bush, the story stuck with me, as did many of the stories found in the Old Testament. Here in Acts, Stephen is recounting the story of God to the religious leaders and high council. He was accused of blasphemy and deceit. The recorded response of Stephen doesn’t begin with a defense of himself or his leadership skills in the rapidly growing early church. Instead, he begins with the story of God at work through ordinary people- the stories he likely heard from his parents as a child.

As Stephen recounts the history of his people, he doesn’t sugarcoat their responses to God. He tells about their selfishness and lack of faith. He recounts their mistakes and their misjudgments. Stephen knows that God’s people are far from perfect. Stephen also knows that God is always at work amid the messiness. Stephen recounts how God interrupted Moses’ daily routine with the herd to remind him that God heard the cries of the people and has come to help them. I can imagine Moses sighing a big sigh mixed with relief and gratitude. Finally God was going to save the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt! God was indeed planning a rescue but not in any way that Moses could have imagined. Instead of sending armies and power, God tells stuttering, old Moses to get ready to go back to the people who had already rejected him. God gave Moses the invitation to join in God’s work to lead the people out of slavery. God does not always work in the ways we expect.

Stephen’s speech changes direction around verse 51 as he points out how the religious leaders were again missing the ways that God works when it doesn’t match their expectations. Instead of becoming reflective and listening to the warning from Stephen, they became angry to the point of giving history its first Christian martyr. How different would the story be if they had ears to hear the warning Stephen was giving to them!

Lent is a season that provides an opportunity to reflect on the ways that we expect to see God at work and determine how they align with the ways that we notice God at work around us. If we

are wise, we pause from our everyday work to notice the unusual prompting from God. It is in those moments that God reminds us that the groans and cries of the people have been heard by our Creator and that God continues to move towards the people because of the great love God has for each and all of us. It is in these moments of noticing and remembering that we can hear the invitation God has for each of us to participate in this work.

When God told Moses, “Get yourself ready,” it was an invitation to do the same interior work that the religious leaders listening to Stephen should have done. It’s the same invitation we hear during Lent- to get ourselves ready for the work that God is going to invite us to join.

Respond

Take some time to reflect on your life. When do you feel close to God? When do you feel far from God? What preparations might you need to do to be ready for the invitation to participate in God’s work of resurrection? Do you need more rest? Do you need more solitude? Do you need more community? Do you need to connect with a Spiritual Director or pastor? What do you need to get yourself ready for Easter?

Rest

God, help us to notice when we are standing in a holy place. Remind us to pause and be present with you. Remind us that you hear our cries for ourselves, our neighbors and our world. Thank you for coming to our aid. Show us what needs to change in our lives so that we can be ready. Help us to be ready for whatever you are sending us to do in this world. May we be willing to step into places where we are powerless so that others might know of your salvation.



About the Author

Mary Peterson lives right outside of Beaumont, Texas, with her husband, two teenagers and two cats. She is passionate about the beach, drinking coffee and traveling. Mary serves as Senior Pastor of a precious church called Providence Church and is completing her Doctorate of Ministry at Fuller Seminary.

Call on God for All Things at All Times

A Reflection for Saturday, March 8 by Rev. Julie Jane Capel

Lectionary reading for 03/08/2025: [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; John 12:27-36](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Read

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 *Wycliffe Bible*

All things have time, and all things under [the] sun pass by their spaces. (Everything hath a time, and all things pass forth in their places under the sun.)

Time of birth, and time of dying; time to plant, and time to draw up that that is planted. (Time to be born, and time to die; time to plant, and time to draw up what is planted.)

Time to slay, and time to make whole (Time to kill, and time to heal); time to destroy, and time to build.

Time to weep, and time to laugh; time to bewail, and time to dance.

Time to scatter stones, and time to gather (them) together; time to embrace, and time to be far from embracing.

Time to get, and time to lose; time to keep, and time to cast away. (Time to get, and time to set free; time to keep, and time to throw away.)

Time to cut, and time to sew together; time to be still, and time to speak (time to be silent, and time to speak).

Time to love, and time of hatred; time of battle, and time of peace. (Time to love, and time to hate; time to fight, and time to make peace.)

Reflect

Over a decade ago I worked on a painting series on Isaiah 58. **Call and Answer** is the fifth in the 40+ art pieces created thus far. It is through the guttural calling out to God of Psalm 91 that I will reflect on Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.



Psalm 91:14-15b - NIV

*"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble*

Ecclesiastes 3 continues to be a faith touch point for me – orienting me towards the fact that God is not startled by unfolding events in my personal life, in the events of the world, or even in how the message of Jesus thrives or gets distorted. **God's lack of alarm is not a lack of care.** In fact, it is in calling out to God during each season/activity that we may be able to appreciate God's lordship over the times of our grief and celebration, the times of our strength and times of our weakness, the times that faith is easy and the times it is difficult to hold onto. In each case, when we call on God he promises to answer us. And not only answer us, but **be with us!**

In reading Ecclesiastes 3, I was struck by how different translations (NIV, MSG, NLT, Wycliffe Bible) can frame the same general experience yet create very different emotional responses in me.

I experience Verse 2b *A time to plant and a time to uproot* (NIV) **distinctly differently** than *A time to plant and a time to harvest* (MSG/NLT). Planting and uprooting connects me to the emotions of moving from city to city and needing to start over. In contrast to how planting and harvesting connects me to good stewardship and planning.

OR

Verse 6a: *A time to search and a time to give up (NIV), A time to search and a time to quit searching (MSG/NLT), Time to get, and time to lose or set free (Wycliffe Bible)* stirs emotions of: calling out to God in frustration versus calling out to go for wisdom versus calling out to God to help me trust when it hurts.

OR

Verse 7b: *A time to be silent and a time to speak (NIV) versus A time to be quiet and a time to speak (MSG/NLT)* in contrast to *time to be still, and time to speak (Wycliffe Bible)*.

To be made to be silent reminds me of children/ women/ immigrants who were not allowed to use their voices or when “silence is deafening” because truth has not been spoken to power. To be quiet reminds me of internal processors who need time to collect their thoughts to be able to speak in the wisest way possible. And to be still, for me, is an act of discipline in order to be a faithful follower of Christ. Each of these are the same general experience but can be framed with very different responses of meaning in regards to calling out to God and God answering with his presence.

Respond

Reader, I invite you to respond by reading these differing translations of verse 8 and **calling out to God in light of current national events in the context of remembering Jesus moving towards the cross in an act of sacrificial love.**

A time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. (NIV/MSG/NLT)
 Time to love, and time of hatred; time of battle, and time of peace. (Wycliffe Bible).
 Time to love, and time to hate; time to fight, and time to make peace. (Wycliffe Bible).

Rest

Lord, we call on you and we are grateful that you do answer. That you do say “here I am” and promise to be with us. We need you to share your mercy with us in this season – in the highs and in the lows. Grant us wisdom to frame experiences we have during this Lenten season with the emotional and physical responses that are most in alignment with your Kingdom. Amen.



About the Author

Rev. Julie Jane Capel lives 15 minutes outside of Washington DC with her husband and 10 year old pup. A North Park Seminary graduate and ECC ordained pastor since 2013 – she continues to do pulpit supply and interim work. Additionally, Julie is an internationally selling impressionist painter. Instagram: @jjcpaintings

Everyone Who Calls, ‘Help, God!’ Gets help.

A Reflection for Sunday, March 9 by Rev. Julia Styles

Lectionary reading for the first Sunday of Lent: [Deuteronomy 26:1-11](#); [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16](#); [Romans 10:8b-13](#); [Luke 4:1-13](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Romans 10:4-13, *The Message*

Read

Romans 10:4-13, *The Message*

4-10 The earlier revelation was intended simply to get us ready for the Messiah, who then puts everything right for those who trust him to do it. Moses wrote that anyone who insists on using the law code to live right before God soon discovers it's not so easy—every detail of life regulated by fine print! But **trusting God to shape the right living in us is a different story**—no precarious climb up to heaven to recruit the Messiah, no dangerous descent into hell to rescue the Messiah. So what exactly was Moses saying?

The word that saves is right here,
as near as the tongue in your mouth,
as close as the heart in your chest.

It's the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. **This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God—“Jesus is my Master”—embracing, body and soul, God's work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead.** That's it. You're not “doing” anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That's salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: **“God has set everything right between him and me!”**

11-13 Scripture reassures us, “No one who trusts God like this—heart and soul—will ever regret it.” **It's exactly the same no matter what a person's religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. “Everyone who calls, ‘Help, God!’ gets help.”**

Reflect

How many of us set our alarms and wake up each morning with good intentions to behave like ideal versions of ourselves? How many of us rely on our own efforts to be a good family member, friend, citizen and follower of Christ? Like the Israelites mentioned in this passage, I am tempted to “use the law code to live right before God.” I try to live up to a perfect ideal and then inevitably fail—I yell at my kids, I avoid a difficult conversation with a friend, I don't do

enough to fight for democracy, and I act selfishly multiple times a day. I want to be a good person. I want to be righteous in God's eyes, and the eyes of my neighbors. But I fail, and that makes me discouraged and anxious and tired.

The good news is that we don't have to rely on our own efforts to become the person God has created us to be. It says in Romans 10:13, that **"Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help."** Throughout history, humans have been tempted to create a bunch of rules about who can access God or who is worthy of Salvation. Some people will claim salvation is gained through behavior, others will claim that salvation is gained through beliefs and proclamation. Paul says, Salvation is not about our own efforts, but comes from the righteous and generous character of God. **This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God—"Jesus is my Master"—embracing, body and soul, God's work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead.**

The words that stand out to me in the verse above is the call to be *welcoming, embracing* God's restorative and redemptive power to work in our lives. This isn't a once and done proclamation of "Jesus is Lord", but a continual invitation to let Jesus rule in our hearts, so that slowly, throughout our lives we become more and more like Christ: loving, kind, compassionate, patient, self-controlled, gentle, slow to anger and quick to serve others. In other words, **"You're not "doing" anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting God to do it for you. That's salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: "God has set everything right between him and me!"**

So what does this look like in my own life? It means the next time I catch myself trying to replicate some ideal version of a "good mom" or a "good Christian" or a "good citizen" I pause. I take a deep breath. I notice my emotions. I give thanks to God, and I ask God to take my anxiety or fear or self condemnation. When I make a mistake, I recognize God's compassion and patience, and I resolve to have compassion and patience for myself, understanding that transformation is not something that happens immediately but throughout my life, it's not something that happens through my own efforts, but through the grace of God. And then I tell myself that I am loved by God just as I am. **"God has set everything right between him and me!"**

Respond

Paul believes that what we say out loud shapes how we understand our relationship with God. Consider adding a mantra or proclamation during Lent. Proclaim each day, **"God has set everything right between him and me!"** or "I am loved by God." or "God will help me in my time of need."

Spend a few moments praying or journaling. What words or phrases are an encouragement for you in this Lenten season? Is there a proclamation or mantra that would remind you God has set everything right between you and God?

Rest

God, too often when I don't meet up to an ideal standard, I feel ashamed and anxious. Help me to remember that you have already set everything right between you and me, and there is nothing I need to do to win your approval. You already love me, you are already working in my life. Help me to "let go and let God" do the work within me to become the person You have created me to be. Amen.

About the Author



Julia Styles is a writer, spiritual director, and mother living in Atlanta, GA. She is passionate about women empowerment and helping people connect with God in their everyday lives. Writing and editing *Prayerful Reflections* is a spiritual practice that continues to re-connect her with God, creativity, and the greater Christian community. As a spiritual director, she meets with people online one-on-one for prayer, discernment, lament and encouragement. If you want a safe and sacred space to reflect on how God is at work in your life, sign up for a free spiritual direction session [here](#).

After God's Own Heart

A Reflection for Monday, March 10 by Samantha Wade

Lectionary Reading for 03/10/2025: [Psalm 17](#); [1 Chronicles 21:1-17](#); [1 John 2:1-6](#)

Selected Passage for reflection: 1 Chronicles 21:1-17

Read

1 Chronicles 21:17 (CSB)

David said to God, "Wasn't I the one who gave the order to count the people? I am the one who has sinned and acted very wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Lord my God, please let your hand be against me and against my father's family, but don't let the plague be against your people."

Reflect

I can see why David is considered "the man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14)". There are few kings in scripture that were willing to be humbled later in their reign. Many of Judah's kings started out faithful and passionate about the things of God. Yet as time passed Solomon was distracted by his wives, Hezekiah did not heed Isaiah's prophecy about exile, Amaziah completely turned from following the Lord, and Uzziah let his pride get in the way of obedience to the Lord.

I want to cheer for David because he makes these three confessions: "I have sinned greatly (1 Chr. 21:8)", "let me fall into the Lord's hands because his mercies are very great (1 Chr. 21:13)", "I have sinned let your hand be against me (1 Chr. 21:17)." When God brings about the consequences for David's sin, David rightly humbles himself out of fear of the Lord. However, there is one aspect about this story which most likely prevents it from becoming a beloved Children's Bible story favorite. David being incited by Satan to take a census leads to the death of 70,000 Israelite men.

It would seem that David's "innocent sheep" bore the brunt of David's sin. David has this beautiful plea that he and his father's family would bear the guilt. But God's response is for David to build an altar and offer sacrifices. I wonder if it was this situation which motivated David to pen this Psalm, "He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his faithful love towards those who fear him (103:10-11)."

At this point, it could be so easy for us to think of people who God "let off" while the innocent have suffered because of their sin. But this example from David's life should be a poignant

reminder that our sin will always harm the innocent. Ultimately it was an innocent person who bore the full punishment of our sins. 1 Peter 2:24-25, “[Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Brothers and Sisters, be humbled by the fear of the Lord and do not sin. Yet, if you fall, know you have a merciful God. He will restore you.

Respond

Read and share Lamentations 3:22-33 with someone. Confess the truth of scripture that God is merciful and abounding in faithful love and confess your sins to one another.

Rest

Father, may our first love not grow cold. May we be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and continue to be teachable. Strengthen us to always be humble that we can continually be conformed into the image of your Son. Amen.

About the Author



Samantha Wade is currently a stay at home mom caring for her three young boys. Samatha received a Masters of Divinity from Denver Seminary in 2018 and was a chaplain in the Army Reserves. As a military wife and mother to young children, life is in constant transition for Samantha, so she strives to do ministry wherever the Lord may take her. Samantha and her family currently reside in Palmer, AK.

The Cry of our Heart

A Reflection for Tuesday, March 11 by Pastor Katherine Mayer

Lectionary reading for 3/11/25: [Psalm 17](#); [Zechariah 3:1-10](#); [2 Peter 2:4-21](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 17 (NRSVUE)

Read

Psalm 17 (NRSVUE)

A Prayer of David.

1 Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry;
give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.

2 From you let my vindication come;
let your eyes see the right.

3 If you try my heart, if you visit me by night,
if you test me, you will find no wickedness in
me;

my mouth does not transgress.

4 As for what others do, by the word of your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.

5 My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.

6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me; hear my words.

7 Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.

8 Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,

9 from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who surround me.

10 They close their hearts to pity;

with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

11 They flush me out; now they surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.

12 They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.

13 Rise up, O Lord, confront them, overthrow
them!

By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,
14 from mortals—by your hand, O Lord—
from mortals whose portion in life is in this
world.

May their bellies be filled with what you have
stored up for them;

may their children have more than enough;
may they leave something over to their little
ones.

15 As for me, I shall behold your face in
righteousness;

when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding
your likeness.

Reflect

David is crying out to God to not only hear him but to protect him. He is looking to God to be his protector and place of safety. The beautiful part is the trust that David has in his prayer to God. He trusts that God will be his place of safety and knows that he can cry out to God. All too often we need to cry out to God but stop ourselves for different reasons. Sometimes we stop ourselves because we don't trust that God will hear our cries or maybe we feel as though our need is not as great as someone else's. Sometimes we stop ourselves because it is scary to

open ourselves up and be vulnerable. Sometimes our pride gets in the way and we think that we can do it ourselves. It is clear that David is not letting his flesh stop him from reaching out to God. He is in need of God's refuge and protection.

As I reflect on this passage, I can't help but think of people in our lives who have the same plea. They are looking to God for protection and refuge. They are crying out for God to hide them in the shadow of God's wings (vs. 8). They are desperate for those who are trying to cause them harm to be held accountable. Their cries are all around us. Can we hear them? Sometimes the cries of those are loud and other times more silent. What can we do when we hear their cries? How does God show steadfast love to us when our cries are heard?

The Lenten season is a time of reflection as we journey to the cross and the celebration of Easter. A time where we let the steadfast love of God wash over us. A time where we might let our cries out more easily. For me my heart is crying out for healing and wholeness for my physical body. My heart is crying for refuge for those in our country who are scared. My heart is crying for justice for those who are in need. My heart is crying and pleading for the division that surrounds us to start to mend. What is your heart crying out to God for? Where do you see God's steadfast love this week?

Respond

Pause and take a deep breath. Take a moment to reflect on what your heart might be crying out for. After you have a moment to reflect.

Reread the passage three to five times to see what God highlights for you. How can you carry that with you today and into the rest of the Lenten season?

Rest

May we rest in the knowledge that we are loved. May we take a moment to breathe in the breath of life. This Lenten season may cling to the love that we feel knowing that our cries are heard. That the pleas we might have for ourselves, our community, and our country are heard by God.

About the Author

Katherine Mayer is a pastor, wife, mom and Spiritual Director. This past fall she stepped down from her position at her church serving as an Associate Pastor so that she could focus on raising her kids and her own health. Being called out of her position was not something she expected but it has been an unexpected gift from the Lord.



Alert at All Times

A Reflection for Wednesday, March 12 by Alex Hofmann Macias

Lectionary reading for 3/12/2025: [Psalm 17](#); [Job 1:1-22](#); [Luke 21:34-22:6](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Luke 21:34-22:6

Read

Luke 21:34-22:6, New Revised Standard Version

³⁴ ‘Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.’

³⁷ Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called. ³⁸ And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple.

22 Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. ² The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people.

³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; ⁴ he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. ⁵ They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

Reflect

While not much of a social media person, I recently logged in to my only account so that I could catch up with a friend. Immediately, a highly charged post on my feed caught my eye. Then another had my attention. Then another. Then another. When I finally logged off, noticing that I was feeling agitated and holding my breath, I opened the screen time app to see just how much time I had spent on this anxiety-riddled excursion. One hour and twenty-seven minutes. Yikes.

In this two-part passage, Jesus warns of a tumultuous future before the coming of the Son of Man and Judas makes a deal to betray Jesus in exchange for money. Passages like this are difficult for uplifting devotional material. To be honest, when I read “Be on guard” and “be alert at all times,” I find myself asking, aren’t I already alert at all times? To be sure, with tech-dependent lives, we are constantly distracted with notifications and alerts dinging on our devices. In the connected age of the internet and social media, we are perpetually reminded of every bad thing

that is happening everywhere in the world at all times. We're not just on alert, we're on high alert.

But I don't think this passage is a call to doom scrolling. Perhaps, being alert is not the same as ruminating in fear. In fact, the text says to be alert so that you are *not* distracted by worries.

The second half of this lectionary text can help us to sort out what we take from this admonition. Prior to Judas's betrayal, the text states that Satan entered him—and we are reminded of the last time we met this character in the book of Luke. Prior to his ministry, Jesus is tempted in the desert by the deceiver who promises him money, power, and security in exchange for his allegiance. How is it that even in his physical weakness in the desert, Jesus does not succumb to the temptation, but Judas later does?

At the start of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen Covey urges us to “begin with the end in mind.” When we have a picture in our minds of what the end looks like, we are more intentional in our actions because we know the direction to move in. In our passage, Jesus both evokes the imagery of the Son of Man in his teachings and returns to the Mount of Olives to rest each night. This figure was understood to bring judgement and deliverance to the people at the end of time, and the Mount of Olives was believed to be the site of this action. Jesus is rooting himself in God's future justice—and he does so even when he knows he is headed for suffering.

As one of the twelve disciples, Judas would know Jesus's teaching, but he wasn't able to do this. Instead, we see Judas aligning himself with the authorities of his day and with the financial security they offered. Are we conscious of the ways we do the same? When tensions rise and the world feels uncertain, it is very tempting to look for security in our finances, in our political alignments, in our shared grievances. But Christ urges us to see that God's justice is the ending, and with that knowledge, we know the direction in which to move.

Rather than operating on *high* alert, let us at all times be discerning. Let us be conscious of where we are finding our comfort and what is motivating our actions. Let us align our hearts with God's justice and love, and let us pray for the strength to do the hard thing that God calls us to even, perhaps especially, when we are anxious and afraid.

Respond

Take a moment to put distractions aside and sit quietly with yourself. Close your eyes and allow whatever is bubbling up in you to do so. It may be something that saddens or scares you. You may find yourself resisting this. We don't like to think about our fears but prefer to cram them into the back of our minds. This time, acknowledge the discomfort instead. Allow it to rise to the surface knowing that God holds it all with you. Breathe deeply. You may even say a breath prayer. Let yourself be seen and embraced by our loving God.

Rest

God of justice and mercy, you meet us in the silence of our hearts. You know our desires, our discomforts, our fears, and our mistakes. Help us to find ourselves in you each day and give us the strength to face any challenge ahead with grace and solidarity. In the name of Jesus, the Son of Man, Amen.

About the Author



Alex Hofmann Macias is a spiritual director and administrator at North Park Theological Seminary where she has served for over fifteen years. A native of Tucson, Arizona, she now lives just outside of Chicago with her husband, two children, and dog. Alex loves international films, good food, novels, laughing (often at herself), and singing really loud in the car.

What Really Matters

A Reflection for Thursday, March 13 by Rev. Oreon K. Trickey

Lectionary Reading for 3/13/25 [Psalm 27; Genesis 13:1-7, 14-18; Philippians 3:2-12](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Philippians 3:2-12

Read

Philippians 3:2-12 *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me.

Reflect

What really matters? When it comes to our faith, relationship with Jesus, journey with God, what are the main things, the non-negotiables of our communion with The Divine?

Of course, it depends on who you ask, right?

In a time when credentials, doctrines, politics, and cultural preferences cry out that they are what should define us as “Christians”, we are refreshed and encouraged by Paul’s bold and blunt proclamation that none of these things are the core and center of our faith. And Paul had

ALL of the credentials, so he's in a good position to discount them in favor of knowing Jesus, being found in Him, receiving the holy righteousness that only God can graciously plant in us.

Paul takes it all to an even deeper level here, saying that he wants to know and experience Christ's sufferings, death, and resurrection. He doesn't want to merely know about Christ or stay in the realm of positivity and triumph, he wants to be united with Jesus fully and completely.

He then concludes this portion of his letter to Philippians, by humbly stating, "Let me be clear. I'm not there yet. I'm still healing, learning, and growing into what it means to be a child of God and a follower of Jesus. But I'm focused and determined to know Christ as deeply as I can."

Amen, Paul, we're with you.

Respond .

- Get comfortable and take some deep centering breaths.
- Take a few moments to consider what is distracting you from fully knowing and following Jesus. What are those voices in social media, in the news, even in church, that seem to impose on you standards and priorities that you know aren't core to who you are in Christ and that cause you to feel inadequate, stressed, and fearful?
- Do a few breath prayers:
 - Breathe in God's love, and breathe out your feelings of inadequacy
 - Breathe in Jesus's life, and breathe out your stress
 - Breathe in the Spirit's presence, and breathe out your fear.
- Feel free to repeat, and repeat, and repeat. Amen.

Rest

Take a few quiet moments to listen to Audrey Assad sing "Open the Eyes of My Heart" on your preferred music platform or here:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/0zvwXqrg2I1bIXDQ1SGw?si=134dfc4ef93b49fa>

About the Author

A long-time resident of Chicago, Oreon is a seasoned urban ministry practitioner, spiritual director, retreat facilitator, and Enneagram consultant. She currently lives and serves with the Jesus People community in the city's Uptown neighborhood. Oreon plays a mean blues guitar, loves to laugh deeply, and appreciates a serious cup of coffee. @oreont



Who Do You Model Your Life after?

A Reflection for Friday, March 14 by Ruth Jensen Zschoche

Lectionary reading for 03/14/2025: [Psalm 27](#); [Genesis 14:17-24](#); [Philippians 3:17-20](#);

Selected passage for reflection: Philippians 3:17-20 (First Nations Version)

Read

Philippians 3:17-20 (First Nations Version)

¹⁷) My sacred family members, I call on you to join with the others who follow me as I walk this road. Keep your eyes on those who walk in the same manner and follow them also. ¹⁸) I have warned you many times that there are a great number of people who walk as enemies of the cross of the Chosen One. And now with tears I warn you again. ¹⁹) A bad end awaits these people. They have made their weak human appetites the spirit they follow. They take pride in doing things they should be ashamed of. They have set their minds on the ways of this world. ²⁰) But the way of life of the tribe we belong to is found in the spirit-world above, and it is from there that we eagerly wait for the one who has set us free and made us whole, our Honored Chief, Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One.

Reflect

When I was growing up I had a favorite aunt who was a nurse. I set my sights on going to college and becoming a nurse because I wanted to be just like her. But when I got to college and began the necessary courses, I realized that I was not cut out to be a nurse. Even though I never became a nurse I still held my aunt in high esteem. I love it when family members tell me I look like her, or I talk like her or even act like her.

Paul in this passage is telling the Philippian Christians to follow in his steps, to walk the road he has chosen, to be like him. The road he is talking about is to follow Jesus. But we know from earlier passages that Paul did not always want to follow Jesus. In fact, he was one of the “enemies of the cross”, zealously searching for those who were following Jesus, and then killing them. I wonder if he was remembering these days when he says, “now with tears I warn you...” Earlier in this chapter he shares his pedigree. Philippians 3:6 (NLT) “I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.”

But Jesus met him on the Damascus Road! Now when he says to follow him as he walks this road, he is inviting the Philippians and you and me to follow the role model he is following. Who is Paul following?

In John Mark Comer's book titled Practicing The Way. Be with Jesus. Become like him. Do as he did, he suggests that we become apprentices' of Jesus. "Apprenticeship to Jesus – that is following Jesus – is a *whole*-life process of being with Jesus for the purpose of becoming like him and carrying on his work in the world. It's a lifelong journey in which we gradually learn to say and do the kinds of things Jesus said and did as we apprentice under him in every facet of our lives... To follow Jesus, then, meant to walk alongside him in a posture of listening, learning, observation, obedience and imitation."

Looking back again at Paul and his conversion there is no clear answer as to how long Paul spent as an apprentice with Jesus before fully beginning his ministry, but we do know that he began immediately to study the Scriptures and to learn more in order to become more like his new-found Lord. Based upon what Paul has written I would believe that the apprenticeship never ended until his life ended.

When he tells the Philippians, and today speaks to us through this passage, to follow in his steps, and to keep our eyes on those who walk in the same manner, he is guiding us to do what he has done, to follow Jesus.

Respond

Are you an apprentice of Jesus? Becoming like Jesus is a lifelong process. Writing a Rule of Life is a good place to start. Comer shares in his book how to write a Rule of Life (<https://www.practicingtheway.org/ruleoflifebuilder>) You can also seek assistance from a Spiritual Director.

Rest

Lord Jesus, draw us close to you, allowing us to attach ourselves to you as apprentices. Teach us daily how to be more like you. Reveal to us who are just as you did to the disciples on the road to Emmaus after your resurrection. Fill us with your love, so that we can pour out that love onto others. Amen

About the Author

Ruth loves her time as a Spiritual Director. She delights in holding space and walking alongside those who are listening for God's movement in their lives. She is mom to one son, a daughter-in-love and Omi to two beautiful granddaughters. She loves to travel with her husband and enjoys running, hiking, biking, swimming, reading, playing the piano and praising God in the beautiful Colorado mountains.



The Lord is my Light

A Reflection for Saturday, March 15 by Rev. Beth Knight

Lectionary reading for 03/15/2025: [Psalm 27](#); [Psalm 118:26-29](#); [Matthew 23:37-39](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 27

Read

Psalm 27 *Common English Bible (CEB)*

The Lord is my light and my salvation.
Should I fear anyone?

The Lord is a fortress protecting my life.
Should I be frightened of anything?

2 When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up—

it's they, my foes and my enemies,
who stumble and fall!

3 If an army camps against me,
my heart won't be afraid.

If war comes up against me,
I will continue to trust in this:

4 I have asked one thing from the Lord—
it's all I seek:

to live in the Lord's house all the days
of my life,

seeing the Lord's beauty
and constantly adoring his temple.

5 Because he will shelter me in his own
dwelling

during troubling times;

he will hide me in a secret place in his
own tent;

he will set me up high, safe on a rock.

6 Now my head is higher than the enemies
surrounding me,

and I will offer sacrifices in God's tent—
sacrifices with shouts of joy!

I will sing and praise the Lord.

7 Lord, listen to my voice when I cry out—
have mercy on me and answer me!

8 Come, my heart says, seek God's face.
Lord, I do seek your face!

9 Please don't hide it from me!

Don't push your servant aside angrily—
you have been my help!

God who saves me,
don't neglect me!

Don't leave me all alone!

10 Even if my father and mother left me all
alone,

the Lord would take me in.

11 Lord, teach me your way;

because of my opponents, lead me on a
good path.

12 Don't give me over to the desires of my
enemies,

because false witnesses and violent
accusers

have taken their stand against me.

13 But I have sure faith

that I will experience the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living!

14 Hope in the Lord!

Be strong! Let your heart take courage!

Hope in the Lord!

Reflect

From a young age, this Psalm has been a favorite of mine. Like pebbles tossed and creating ripples across a water body, the first two lines skim outward and carry forward the resounding message that the Lord is Light and Salvation. Next is the emphasis that the Lord protects, shelters and is merciful. As a child of divorced parents it was particularly comforting that the Lord is named as one who will take me in. There were plenty of times in my formative years that hope and courage were needed. The Psalmist does not tell us to believe in humans, rather the Psalmist encourages trust in someone greater: the Lord. Further passion expresses the posture of seeking God's face. The refrain of Hope in the Lord! Hope in the Lord! is the final exclamation of this Psalm. It became one I also would pass on to others time and time again, as I saw the Lord's goodness lead me on a good path. Most likely you too have stories and memories of challenges in life. Often life can create anxiety within us. Psalm 27 portrays a seeker who wishes to not be afraid and chooses to worship the Lord with thanksgiving; having a vast sense of God's prevenient grace. We live in a world where anxiety can seep into our hearts. Yet this Psalm fervently reminds us that we can live confidently, hold our heads high above any enemy and Hope in the Lord! This Psalm beckons to me to also pray a modern collect, titled "Collect When Anxious"; which just like Psalm 27, I can return to often:

Collect When Anxious (copyright Beth Knight)

"Adonai,
 How dear is Your name.
 Adonai,
 Shield from angst,
 Gentle Breeze,
 Anchor,
 Enliven us
 With resilience,
 For the moment,
 For the night,
 For the long journey.
 Bread of Heaven,
 Cup of Salvation,
 You are
 The Great Sustainer.
 Amen."

Respond

Allow yourself to repeat this collect several times as a sequel to Psalm 27. Perhaps print this collect to accompany you in times of angst. You might also consider this breath prayer:

Inhale: Shield from angst.

Exhale: Thankyou Great Sustainer.

Rest

Continue intentionally and prayerfully breathing in and out, and then in *lectio divina* fashion recite the above breath prayer three times. Inhale: Shield from angst. Exhale: Thank you Great Sustainer. Rest and trust in the balm of these phrases.

About the Author



Beth Knight is an ordained pastoral counselor and spiritual director. She also writes collects, Celtic caims, blessings and poetry. A former Alaskan, Beth now lives in Florida. When not serving in ministry, Beth loves spending time with three grandchildren, walking labyrinths, and is very involved with a global contemplative women's online community.

Light in the Shadows: Finding Courage in Uncertainty

A Reflection for Sunday, March 16 by Klamesha P. Richards

Lectionary reading for 03/16/2025: [Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 27:1-14

Read

Psalm 27:1-14

"The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall, I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? [...] I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." *NIV*

Reflect

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, I learned early that fear and faith often dance together in the shadows of our lives. Fear of being different, fear of becoming a statistic, fear of what the future will hold. This psalm speaks to me deeply because it acknowledges both our human fears and our divine source of courage.

As an educator working with diverse communities, I've witnessed countless students face their own shadows—whether it's the uncertainty of being the first in their family to attend college, the weight of cultural expectations, or the daily challenges of navigating spaces where they feel unseen. Like the psalmist, they too must find their light in the darkness.

What strikes me most about this passage is its raw honesty. The writer doesn't pretend that fear doesn't exist; instead, they reframe it through the lens of divine protection. "The Lord is my light"—not just a guide, but source itself. In the face of uncertainty, this isn't just spiritual poetry—it's a survival strategy.

The closing verses particularly resonate: "I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." This isn't about waiting for some distant heavenly reward. It's about finding hope in the here and now, in the midst of our messy, beautiful, challenging lives. As someone who works in Mission Integration, I'm constantly reminded that our faith must be lived out in the present moment, finding God in everything, in how we treat each other, in how we build community, in how we face our fears together.

The command to "wait for the Lord" isn't passive—it's an active stance of courage and

resilience. It's about standing firm when everything within us wants to run, about believing in the light even when the shadows seem overwhelming.

Respond

Today, identify one fear that's holding you back. Write it down, then beside it, write "The Lord is my light." Choose one concrete action that moves you from fear toward faith—whether that's reaching out to someone different from you, speaking up for justice, or simply taking the next right step in your journey.

Rest

Divine Light,

Shine on our paths when darkness threatens to overwhelm. Give us courage to face our fears, wisdom to wait with purpose, and faith to see Your goodness in the land of the living. Help us be light-bearers for others who walk in shadow.

Amen.

About the Author



Klamesha P. Richards serves as Associate Director of Ignatian Spirituality at Loyola University Chicago, where she transforms programs to foster belonging among faculty and staff. A South Side Chicago native with degrees from Northern Michigan University and Wheaton College, she brings her passion for all things Disney, travel, spiritual formation, and multicultural education to her work in Mission Integration.

Who Are You Calling Stiff-Necked?

A Reflection for Monday, March 17 by Rev. Joy Fishler

Lectionary reading for 03/17/2025: [Psalm 105:1-42](#); [Exodus 33:1-6](#); [Romans 4:1-12](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Exodus 33:1-6

Read

Exodus 33:1-6

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ 2 I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 3 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” 4 When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. 5 For the Lord had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.’” 6 So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.

Reflect

When I think back to when I’m most angry with my spouse, children or family members, like boiling over mad, it’s first and foremost because my heart got hurt. Anger can be the response to the hurt and pain I feel. If you’ve been married for longer than a minute you might be lifting up your coffee mug to me as you read this and say, “cheers to that!” However, years ago I had an adult sibling accuse me of saying something behind their back to other family members. It was a case of he said/she said and my words were misconstrued and taken out of context and incorrectly shared. I would never have said what I was accused of saying. No matter how much I explained, I couldn’t convince them otherwise. I felt like I was in the twilight zone. This is such a simple misunderstanding I’d think to myself. Yet, this issue blew up and before I knew it my character was assassinated. Months went by and my deep hurt wrote an email. It was like anger took the keyboard and told hurt and pain to sit back and watch how this is done. I wrote an angry ugly email that I wish I’d never sent (this sibling wouldn’t take my phone calls). I no longer defended myself, I turned into an accuser and destroyed what little of the relationship was left. All of this because I was truly brokenhearted.

In verse 3, God says, “I might destroy you on the way,” and in verse 5, “you are a stiff-necked people.” Strong’s defines stiff-necked as stubborn, hardhearted, impudent, obstinate and cruel. God is hurt. This people that He loves more than anything keeps worshiping other gods even after they were rescued from slavery, miraculously provided for over and over and over again. God is so faithful, so patient, so kind and SO FORGIVING. Right before they were to enter the

promised land, the people went and made themselves a golden calf to worship. God is angry. His direct presence would be dangerous for the Israelites. God distances Himself from them as a consequence of their sin, though He still promises to fulfill His covenant, just from slightly “over there.”

God is brokenhearted and God is angry. The people He loves with all His heart have turned against him once again, BUT He doesn't unleash his anger, He leads them forward in love. My actions of anger have never led to peace and they never will. Getting hurt and angry is something we will always have to navigate, but what we do with it can bring life or it can bring death.

Respond

The bad news is, we are those Israelites. Maybe we aren't “stiff-necked” today but we probably were and probably will be at some point again. Humanity is flawed. There is a promise land ahead for each of us and I want to walk into it holding hands and singing songs (not really but I think you get the idea). The thought of Jesus being broken hearted because of me is a sobering thought. What must we do? We go back to step 1. Repentance. We always go back to step 1, every single day if we have to. What am I “worshipping” other than Jesus? Repent. Where have I allowed anger to take over? Repent. Where have I followed my own selfish desires? Repent.

Rest

Jesus, how patient you are with me. How faithful you are even when I am not. There is nothing in this world that satisfies like you do. Help me to look more like you. Help me to act more like you. Help me to live in a manner that makes you proud. I want to be the best version of myself and I can only do that through you. Jesus, help me to follow you well. Thank you for the gift of repentance. Thank you for the gift of your patience and thank you that you gave up your life for all humanity. I love you.

About the Author



Joy Fishler is an Ordained Minister in the Evangelical Covenant Church. She has a Masters Degree from NorthPark Seminary in Christian Formation. She currently resides with her family in the Sacramento Area and is the Pastor of Adult Ministry at Life Community Church. She loves Jesus, loves people and absolutely loves raising her teenage girls. She has a passion for preaching and leading people to the heart of the Father. She truly believes that there is nothing better than Jesus and following Him is the only life worth living.

@joyfullyunfilteredandstuff

Cultivate God-Confidence

A Reflection for Tuesday, March 18 by Rev. Alicia Vela Anderson

Lectionary reading for 03/18/2025: [Psalm 105:1-42; Numbers 14:10b-24; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13;](#)

Selected passage for reflection: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Read

1 Corinthians 10:1-13, *The Message*

Remember our history, friends, and be warned. All our ancestors were led by the providential Cloud and taken miraculously through the Sea. They went through the waters, in a baptism like ours, as Moses led them from enslaving death to salvation life. They all ate and drank identical food and drink, meals provided daily by God. They drank from the Rock, God's fountain for them that stayed with them wherever they were. And the Rock was Christ. But just experiencing God's wonder and grace didn't seem to mean much—most of them were defeated by temptation during the hard times in the desert, and God was not pleased.

The same thing could happen to us. We must be on guard so that we never get caught up in wanting our own way as they did. And we must not turn our religion into a circus as they did—"First the people partied, then they threw a dance." We must not be sexually promiscuous—they paid for that, remember, with 23,000 deaths in one day! We must never try to get Christ to serve us instead of us serving him; they tried it, and God launched an epidemic of poisonous snakes. We must be careful not to stir up discontent; discontent destroyed them.

These are all warning markers—DANGER!—in our history books, written down so that we don't repeat their mistakes. Our positions in the story are parallel—they at the beginning, we at the end—and we are just as capable of messing it up as they were. Don't be so naive and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence.

No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it.

Reflect

During a recent discussion about the Holy Spirit and how we listen to her, I was asked by a pre-teen, "Is the Holy Spirit the same thing as our conscience?" I asked her to flush out her

question a little more and she went on, "Like, that voice in our head telling us what to do - sometimes people say that's our conscience - is it really the Holy Spirit?"

Up to that moment in the conversation, we had found places in scripture that defined the Holy Spirit as a guide, an advocate, a truth teller, etc. So her question made sense to me, but it also begs the question, is the voice in our heads telling us what to do always the truth, is it always right? Who or what is that voice in our heads?

This launched us into a conversation about all the different sources that contribute to the voice in our heads - our families, our friends, social media, the internet, our teachers, our coaches, the list goes on and on. I would, on some level, love to be able to tell this group of pre-teens that the voice inside their head is always telling them the truth and pointing them towards love because it's the Holy Spirit. But the reality is, their feeds are being clogged with so many voices, it's hard to always tell the ones they should listen to. And if history tells us anything, we shouldn't always listen to all those voices - which I think might be behind what Paul is saying here.

So instead, we talked about how to tell the voices apart. We talked about how the voice of the Divine will always be a voice of love, Love for ourselves and love for others. We talked about how the voice of the Divine will always desire thriving, for ourselves and for others. And we talked about relying on our community to help pull apart these layers of voices.

As I read this warning in 1 Corinthians, I am surprised at what comes up in me when I read the phrases: "Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence." As a woman, I almost think Paul is telling me not to trust myself, as if it's incredibly easy to have full confidence in exactly what God wants from me in this crazy, noisy world around me.

But then I remember that conversation with that group of pre-teens, and my own advice that the divine speaks love and thriving over me and my world. My version of self-confidence - it comes from the armor I've had to wear in the battlefield of being a woman of color in mostly white, male dominant spaces. My version of self-confidence can be self serving, power craving, and the kind of truth telling that comes at the sake of others.

But when I think about God-Confidence, I think about the idea that humility comes from an accurate depiction of myself, through the eyes of the Divine. God-confidence reorients my vision towards the love and thriving of and for all people, myself included. God-confidence reminds me that the divine has uniquely created me and gifted me, not for power hoarding but for empowering. God-confidence reminds me that I can tell the truth without dehumanizing another person or people group.

Self-confidence makes me forget my humanity and wants me to be perfectly right all the time. But God-confidence embraces my humanity, reminds me to keep growing, keep learning, and keep loving.

Respond

Spend some time today examining the voices in your heads. That phrase that pops into your head when you're trying to make a decision. That thought about that person that drives you crazy. That idea of who you are when you look in the mirror. When did you first start hearing it? Where did it come from? Spend some time asking the Divine what they think about this thought - is it one you should listen to or discard?

Rest

Gracious God, as we go about our day and hear the voices that are screaming all around us, help us to hone in on your tender voice. The voice that reminds us we are loved, even when we're wrong. That we are going to be okay, even when we can't feel it. Remind us that we are your beloved creation, still in process. Breathe your life and love into our lungs as we inhale. Amen

About the Author



Rev Alicia Vela Anderson lives in Chicago with her husband Jed. She loves exploring the neighborhoods to find local communities in small business, coffee shops, restaurants, and bars. She has a deep passion for kids, youth, and their families wrestling with how to discover and embody faith practices in their day to day lives.

The Narrow Door

A Reflection for Wednesday, March 19 by Rev. Charlene Rotvold

Lectionary Reading for 3/19/2025: [Psalm 105:1-42; 2 Chronicles 20:1-22; Luke 13:22-31](#)

Passage selected: Luke 13:22-30 NLT

Read

Luke 13:22-30 NLT

²² Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he went, always pressing on toward Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, “Lord, will only a few be saved?”

He replied, ²⁴ “Work hard to enter the narrow door to God’s Kingdom, for many will try to enter but will fail. ²⁵ When the master of the house has locked the door, it will be too late. You will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Lord, open the door for us!’ But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ ²⁶ Then you will say, ‘But we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷ And he will reply, ‘I tell you, I don’t know you or where you come from. Get away from me, all you who do evil.’

²⁸ “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for you will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you will be thrown out. ²⁹ And people will come from all over the world—from east and west, north and south—to take their places in the Kingdom of God. ³⁰ And note this: Some who seem least important now will be the greatest then, and some who are the greatest now will be least important then.”

Reflect

The Narrow Door, my Bible titles this section. I scratch my head and as I ponder how to explain this passage and the life it describes to a beloved friend who is walking the broad road, which is full of wide open doors. How do I explain the truth in love, how do I describe my God, who is not safe but is good, in ways that are honest and winsome? How do I accurately represent (and point to) the God of love, who *asks* things of us, without sounding judgmental? Oh how the world begs us to be inclusive, to assure them that surely God’s love takes care of all things and all people (sin notwithstanding). Which it does... in the end... *in Christ alone*.

If I had a nickel for every time I’ve overheard a well-intentioned, wannabe-encourager talk with unfounded confidence about the “better place” that a loved one has surely entered after death, I’d be long retired (although deeply disheartened). Sigh.

It sounds good, this “better place,” doesn’t it? At first (and fluffy) glance, anyway. Such talk seems to help those who do not know Jesus feel settled in a time of loss, move forward in the grief process, and anticipate their own eventual death without fear. Initially and from a distance, anyway. But deep down, and when the time comes, not at all. Because those are shallow words. Hollow. Mere platitudes.

My beloved friend calls himself a Christian and truly believes it to be so. He will confess with his mouth that “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior,” and yet as I look at his life, I see (alongside such things as laughter and work and bills paid and a home maintained and friendships sustained) unhealthy and un-Christlike doses of profanity, sex, gambling, truth-stretching, and alcohol abuse. A church home? Nope. Christian friends? Few. Serving, giving, prayer, Scripture? Slim to none.

Friends, what does it *mean* to call oneself a Christian? Quite frankly, and according to our text, it means *nothing* apart from real knowing, real following, real life evidence in daily life. Separated from our living, it’s just a word.

I think this is the heart of this passage; that it should *mean* and *look* and *sound* like something, this faith of ours. That it really *cost* something, this gift of salvation we’ve been offered. Oh yes, the offer is indeed free and readily available to all, but unless we *receive* it, and unless we *follow* Christ (or at least try to), our mere words do the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the witness of the Church a grave and dangerous disservice.

Respond

The invitation I’m left pondering, one that I invite you to wrestle with as well, is this: Instead of calling yourself a Christian or asking if someone is a Christian, what if we stated instead “I am a follower of Jesus,” and asked if another is a follower of Jesus? I wonder where and how the conversation would turn as a result? Cross-ward and Christ-ward, I would expect.

Rest

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of Your Name. Amen.

About the Author



Charlene Rotvold is the Care & Connect Pastor at Faith Covenant Church in Burnsville, MN. After serving her church part-time for 10 years, God called her to pastoral ministry, and she has served in her current capacity, and at the same church, for close to 17 (additional) years. Along with pastoring, Char is a trained coach and spiritual director in the ECC, has been married to Kirk for 30+ years, and is the proud mom to two adult children and one geriatric mini-labradoodle. She enjoys running, reading, laughter, wilderness camping, traveling, and time with family and friends.

Drawing From Your Reserves

A Reflection for Thursday, March 20 by Jennifer Andersson

Lectionary for Thursday, March 20, 2025: [Psalm 63:1-8](#); [Daniel 3:19-30](#); [Revelation 2:8-11](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 63:1-8

Read

Psalm 63:1-8 NLT

God, you are my God;
 I earnestly search for you.
 My soul thirsts for you;
 my whole body longs for you
 in this parched and weary land
 where there is no water.
 I have seen you in your sanctuary
 and gazed upon your power and glory.
 Your unfailing love is better than life itself;
 how I praise you!

I will praise you as long as I live,
 lifting up my hands to you in prayer.
 You satisfy me more than the richest feast.
 I will praise you with songs of joy.
 I lie awake thinking of you,
 meditating on you through the night.
 Because you are my helper,
 I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings.
 I cling to you;
 your strong right hand holds me securely.

Reflect

This passage is said to have been written by David during a time in the wilderness in Judah. Most commentators believe, whether this was prior to David being king, or while he was king, he was fleeing from one who wanted him dead (either Saul or Absalom). David not only found himself in a physical wilderness, but perhaps an emotional and spiritual wilderness as well. In the first few verses, David's words paint a picture of near desperation. He is earnestly searching for God, with a thirst that consumes his whole body. The parched and weary land — of his surroundings, and perhaps his spirit — have given no relief. There is no water. His circumstances sound dire. Hopeless. And yet, even in this time of desperation, David somehow finds the ability to thank God and offer praise, because I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory. Notice how his praise is drawn from experiencing God in the past, not necessarily in his current state. His praise comes from a place of having already seen and experienced his Creator's unfailing love. He clings to this deep knowing of God's provision and presence. David talks of lying awake, meditating on you through the night. In the shadow of your wings. In this season of Lent, a time where we are invited to accompany Jesus in a desert place where even the Holy relied on what was deeply known over what may be currently experienced. How are you being invited to draw from your own well of knowing this day?

Respond

As you pause and take time to meet with the Spirit this day through this passage, slowly read it one or two more times. Be present to each word. Breathe.

In the silence you give yourself now, ask:

- What does “being in the wilderness” mean to me today?
- Where am I sensing God is in proximity to me today? What is my proximity to myself? To others?
- What is the status of my own well? Does it have enough thirst-quenching reserves, or does it need replenishing, even if it comes from a rain-storm?
- Where in my life do I sense longing, as from a parched and weary land?
- Where is my sense of the Holy in this wilderness?
- How am I being invited to be with the Spirit, however I find myself today?
- Is praise available to me today?
- How am I being led to draw from God’s promises to me for this day?

Rest

Take a deep, into your belly, inhale. Now slowly release it through your mouth. Repeat that a few times. Now add this breath prayer, repeating it as many times as you need:

Inhale: *The world feels dim*

Exhale: *But I can dream in the dark*

Inhale: *The world feels dim*

Exhale: *But I can rest in the dark*

(From Cole Arthur Reily’s Black Liturgies)

About the Author



In her work life, Jennifer finds expression as a spiritual director, retreat leader, pastor, clinical social worker, advocate, and most especially, beloved child of God. In April of 2023, Jennifer opened the “doors” of [Journey Center of Michigan](#) to make space for meeting people where they are on their spiritual journey, especially for those who don’t or can’t find expression in traditional settings. Through it all, she loves to discover and expand her understanding and experience of God through relationship, creation, music, nature, and creative expression.

Practicing Lectio Divina

A Reflection for Friday, March 21 by Carole DuBois

Lectionary reading for 03/21/2025: [Psalm 63:1-8](#); [Daniel 12:1-4](#); [Revelation 3:1-6](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Revelation 3:-16

Read

Revelation 3:1-6 NIV

3 To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. 6 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Reflect

Today's reading, on this 17th day of Lent, is from "The Revelation to John (Apocalypse)," commonly called, "Revelation."

Apocalyptic, or revelatory, writings are found throughout Jewish literature. However, the only other book length apocalypse in the Bible is "Daniel."

The latter chapters of "Revelation," are loud and chaotic, and full of strange creatures. In the first three chapters, though, there are letters to churches, including today's reading - a letter to the church in Sardis. The letters contain Jesus' messages to those who worship him.

Since Prayerful Reflections uses a *lectio divina* format, I thought this would be a good opportunity to do the spiritual practice as the reader.

Respond

As you read today's passage *Revelation 3:1-6*, imagine yourself as the recipient of a letter from one who knows you well and loves you dearly. You will read through the passage three times.

First, slowly read through the passage and let the words wash over you.

Note a word or phrase from the passage that captures your attention. Simply notice what it is. If nothing in particular rises to the surface, just meditate on the words as a whole.

Second, read through the passage again. If these words were read aloud to you when you were with a group of friends, how would it feel?

Have you ever received a letter, voicemail, text or email, that left you feeling untethered or upset? How about a communication that made you feel loved? Did you share what you received with anyone? Why or why not?

There are words of hope and encouragement as well as words of condemnation in this passage. Is the word or phrase that caught your attention a word of consolation or a word of conviction?

Repeat the word or phrase that stands out to you to yourself. How does it feel? Where, in your body, do you notice the word or phrase resonating? Is it in your stomach, your head, your heart? Why do you think you feel it where you do?

Read through the passage a third time. Afterwards, sit in silence for a minute or two, listening to what the Lord is speaking to you.

How is God inviting you to respond to this passage today?

What prayer or petition rises in your heart?

Offer that now or simply sit with God in love.

Rest

God who communes with us in myriad ways, help us to remember that every message from you has loving-kindness at its core. As creation springs from words of life and hope, and resurrection comes as we practice it, equip us to speak words of life and hold to the hope of resurrection, in a world in need. Amen.



About the Author

Carole duBois is an officiant and retreat leader living in New Bern, NC. She enjoys time near the water and hearing stories of God at work in the world.

Harvesting Good Fruit: Speaking Truth to Your Values

A Reflection for Saturday, March 22 by Rev. Dr. Elrica Adams-Finney

Lectionary reading for Saturday, March 22, 2025: [Psalm 63:1-8; Isaiah 5:1-7; Luke 6:43-45](#):

Selected passage for reflection: Luke 6:43-45

Read

Luke 6:43-45 *NIV*

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Reflect

In a season of such great division and differing opinions where can the beauty of God's teachings be found? As the world moves around us and the wonder of God's perfect and amazing work is often overlooked, where do we begin to unite? Is it with discerning the origin of the discord described in this chosen scripture as good tree bearing bad fruit versus the contrasting alternative? Is it in the dichotomy of good and bad (evil) itself? In our thirst for understanding and desire to please God, unpacking the threads within the stitches that are sown is the foundation for understanding. It leads to the cornerstone that is represented in our own true voice.

We begin this reflecting journey on the heart of the issue. Our takeaway is that to produce good fruit, the tree must be good. As we tread through life with differing viewpoints examining the heart is essential. Do your desires come from a non-judgemental place that does not put "self" first? If yes, then the fruit must be good even though the size, shape or color picked may be unexpected. At the other end of the continuum, there is bad fruit picked that stemmed from good intentions however damaging the order was by misinterpretation. Do we throw the baby away with the bathwater? In retrospect, because the tree gave way to one season of bad fruit, is the tree still a good tree or even capable of good? Yes, we can have differing opinions and still love one another!

Our bible clearly states the existence of good and evil. Good is represented as God (Psalm 145:9), evil and suffering in this world is received as factual (John 16:33) and we are commanded to do something about evil (Romans 12:21). Discerning the essence of each phase of this reflection looks different per individual. I invite you to examine your own heart with the guidance of God. Reflect on the good you would like to produce. Make changes that cause the source (self) to be good and then act by speaking your truth. Identify your values based on those concerns in alignment with your heart, spiritual discernment and love for all God's

creations. Please hear what speaks to your heart (John 10:27-28) and trust in God's promises (Jeremiah 29:11). Since the bible is interconnected the support that enables us to respond to the chosen scripture of Luke 6:43-45 resonates throughout the "living word" of the bible.

Respond

You have already been invited above to look inward utilizing God's presence. Go and solidify your understanding by reading this verse repetitively. Take a walk and expose your innermost guarded barriers to the beauty of what God can do. Define your definition of good and determine whether it aligns with God's word. Think of all the good that is derived from good sources. Now redirect your thoughts and actions that are not from a good source. Speak on it. Learn from it. Make sure it is heard as a source to promote change: in thinking, in speaking, in understanding and in praying for continued guidance.

Rest

Dearest God and Precious Holy One, please hear our prayer. Teach us to love one another in the agape love that You reign down upon us. As we discern the issues of today, help us to produce good fruit. Lord, help us to grow with your divine wisdom a tolerance for those that are different from us or have different viewpoints, yet are still Your beloved children. Let the tree of life that bears our fruit produce good works that are ever pleasing to You. As we breathe in your exemplary presence, let us exhale all sounds, voices and works that are not in accordance with your word. Make this our good fruit, Oh God. Our good fruit that belongs to You, the source of all things that are good. Amen.

About the Author



Rev. Dr. Elrica Adams-Finney, DMin BCC is a staff chaplain and working in on-call supervisor role for two major hospital networks in Monroe County and Eastern Pennsylvania. She is a public speaker who advocates for vulnerable populations. She enjoys global research travel to historic places such as Israel, South Africa and Egypt. She takes pride in her six sons and eleven grandchildren! Nature walks are where she finds peace and joy. She patiently awaits the release this summer of her new book, *Go Tell It on the Mountain: Justice Begins When the Vulnerable are Heard*.

One of These Things is not Like the Other

A Reflection for Sunday, March 23 by Rev. Corenna Rae Hoyt

Lectionary reading for 03/23/2025: [Isaiah 55:1-9](#), [Psalm 63:1-8](#), [1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#), [Luke 13:1-9](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Luke 13:1-9

Read

Book Chapter: Luke 13:1-9 CEB

Some who were present on that occasion told Jesus about the Galileans whom Pilate had killed while they were offering sacrifices. He replied, "Do you think the suffering of these Galileans proves that they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did. What about those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them? Do you think that they were more guilty of wrongdoing than everyone else who lives in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did."

Jesus told this parable: "A man owned a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. He said to his gardener, 'Look, I've come looking for fruit on this fig tree for the past three years, and I've never found any. Cut it down! Why should it continue depleting the soil's nutrients?' The gardener responded, 'Lord, give it one more year, and I will dig around it and give it fertilizer. Maybe it will produce fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.'"

Reflect

For over 15 years, I belonged to a team that was all men other than myself. After every official meeting, they would do something together, leaving me behind. When someone pointed it out, one of the men intentionally invited me. I was filled with nervous energy as self-consciousness and gratefulness warred within me. I would finally be in the room where significant conversations happened, so I set my shoulders and walked through the door to find two of the men in their boxer shorts! I felt as out of place as a fig tree in a vineyard.



Why is a fig tree planted in the vineyard? The tree is not the purpose or focus of a field cultivating grapes. Perhaps the seed sprouted from a fig dropped along the way, and the gardener allowed it to grow or, maybe, it was planted so not one square inch of the vineyard is wasted. After three years of checking the vineyard, the owner sees no fruit and assumes the fig tree is useless. He asks the gardener to cut it down. It seems the owner does not understand or does not care to understand that while grape vines take up to three years to fruit, fig trees can take up to five.

Many of us have moments when we experience the world as a fig tree amid grape vines, some spend our lives placed in fields not built for us where we are still expected to thrive. People expect us to look and act like grape vines, people doubt us and threaten to cut us down if we don't produce in ways defined by others who are wholly unlike us.

The fig tree reminds us that the world's expectations are not those of the gardener and need not be ours. The gardener sees the value and potential in the fig tree. The gardener digs around the roots and packs in fertilizer, providing sustenance for this tree to not simply survive but flourish where it is planted. Perhaps the next year this incongruous tree will provide food to sustain the vineyard workers, perhaps it will provide shade for those workers to rest. The parable does not tell us because we already understand the point. Whether living fig tree moments or fig tree lives, we are invited to be nourished so we are enabled to grow into our purpose.

Luke invites us to disrupt our ideas about how the world works, to abandon our earthly measurements of success and value. Just as we cannot measure someone's sinfulness by their

suffering, we cannot measure worth by productivity. We are invited to allow ourselves to be nourished in unique ways and, like the gardener, to take the time to tend to others, trusting intentional care to lead to new life.

Respond

Who in your midst is living a “fig tree existence”? What patterns and systems need to be disrupted to enable everyone to flourish in that place? What could you, like the gardener, do to nourish their roots?

The fig tree was reminded it is valuable apart from what it produces. What practice helps you to detangle your worth from your productivity? Renew that practice! I encourage you to also pick a time this week to refrain from productivity, practicing your worthiness apart from your work. Perhaps you will stand at a window or drink a cup of tea on the back porch.

Rest

God who Sees, may the fig tree remind us that we are worthy, just as we are. We are not a lost cause and never a waste of resources. Fill us with audacious hope for our flourishing, and for the flourishing of those around us. In a system and society that often measures worth by commerce, output, achievement, ethnicity, success, status, and/or gender identity, it would be easy for us to question, with the land owner, “Can a fig tree that does not produce figs be of value? Remind us that the resounding answer is, “yes!” As we find ourselves in seasons of unproductiveness or being planted in foreign territory give us patience. Nurture our souls as we practice audacious hope and intentional care of one another, inviting a flourishing life.

About the Author



Coreenna lives in Rhode Island with her sons, Braden and Levi, who are involved together in missions, martial arts, music, and outdoor activities. She has been a vocational minister for more than 25 years, serving in a variety of contexts. She loves speaking, preaching, building community and coaching, as well as equipping and visioning ministries. She would tell you she continues to learn how to listen well and walk vulnerably as she endeavors to empower people to become confident, vulnerable, generous leaders. These fuel her lifetime passion for ministries of justice, reconciliation, restoration, and healing.

Selah

A Reflection for Monday, March 24 by Jeanne Barnes

Lectionary reading for 3/24/2025: [Psalm 39, Jeremiah 11:1-17, Romans 2:1-11](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 39 (NRSV)

Read

Psalm 39

I said; "I will guard my ways
that I may not sin with my tongue;
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth
as long as the wicked are in my presence."
I was silent and still;
I held my peace to no avail,
my distress grew worse,
my heart became hot within me.
While I mused, the fire burned;
then I spoke with my tongue.

"Lord, let me know my end,
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
You have made my days a few
handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.
Surely everyone stands as a mere breath.

Shelah

Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
they heap up, and do not know who will
gather.

"And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in you.
Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool.
I am silent. I do not open my mouth,
for it is you who have done it.
Remove your stroke from me;
I am worn down by the blows of your hand.

"You chastise mortals in punishment for sin,
consuming like a moth what is dear to them;
surely everyone is a mere breath.

Shelah

"Hear my prayer, O Lord,
and give ear to my cry;
do not hold your peace at my tears.
For I am your passing guest,
an alien, like all my forebears.
Turn your gaze away from me, that I may
smile again,
before I depart and am no more."

Reflect

As a former English teacher I am always in awe of the imagery presented in this Psalm. Feeling somewhat sorry for himself, David ponders his situation. He is enduring the suffering brought on by his sins and he tries to keep silent. The images he presents -a muzzle, a burning fire- are

noticeable for their oppressiveness and harm. A sense of heaviness surrounds the listener. It is as if David wants his audience to be weighted down with the sorrow he is feeling. He is heavy with a burden that is out of his control and we feel that burden, too.

David is keeping silent because he doesn't want to cry out to God in the presence of those who might misunderstand his intent. He suffers quietly until the fire within is too strong. He finds no peace and breaks his silence in order to ask God for wisdom and forgiveness.

After he speaks, the Psalm turns from a heavy, burdensome tone to one of weightlessness. He uses words that have no structure – breath, shadow. Once David has turned from a focus on himself to a focus on God, his heavy load is lightened. With no self-justification and with humility, he asks God how much longer he will have life. His focus turns from one to all. Everyone's life is a mere breath. At this point, his listeners begin to think not just of David but of ourselves. There are even pauses (*Selah*) written in. These were initially for the musicians who were to perform this Psalm, but they are important for us, too. When we pause and ponder how brief life is, we change our focus, sometimes even our plans.

As the Psalm ends, David becomes bold enough to ask Yahweh to withhold the punishment he knows he deserves. As listeners we know that David's sins are great, even including murder and adultery, but we are moved from sympathy to empathy. We know we aren't deserving of mercy, but we, along with David, know the measure of our life is short. And so, we, along with David, humbly ask for joy once again.

Isn't this what Lent is all about? We dwell on the heaviness of those 40 days so that we can eventually experience the lightness of Easter. We humble ourselves by prayer and fasting with the hope that our sinful suffering will, like life, be fleeting. We look toward Easter with a renewed sense of joy. And whether we have many pages left in our life's story or we are in the last chapter, we can smile again.

Respond

As the year goes by and we turn each page of the calendar, let's pause (*selah*) for a moment and look at that new page. Before we start filling in all our to-do's, let's remind ourselves how quickly life passes and ask God to give us wisdom to know the divine plan for our lives. Finally, let's add a reminder for that month to pause for a moment or two each day to check that our plans coincide with that divine plan.

Rest

O God, of all wisdom and mercy, give us a glimpse of your divine plan for us and the strength to carry it out. And, most of all, grant us your mercy when we fall short.

About the author



Jeanne Barnes is a retired English teacher living in the small coastal town of Gulf Breeze, Florida. There she has been instrumental in organizing a weekly faith-sharing group for the past 30 years. She is also co-chair of the Foster Family Support Ministry, an organization advocating for safe and loving placement of foster children as well as providing financial support and respite care for the foster families.

Action Changes Things (ACT)

A Reflection for Tuesday, March 25 by Rev. Alka Lyall

Lectionary reading for 3/25/2025: [Psalm 39; Ezekiel 17:1-10; Romans 2:12-16](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 39 (NRSV)

Read

Romans 2:12-16 (CEB)

12 Those who have sinned outside the Law will also die outside the Law, and those who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law. 13 It isn't the ones who hear the Law who are righteous in God's eyes. It is the ones who do what the Law says who will be treated as righteous. 14 Gentiles don't have the Law. But when they instinctively do what the Law requires they are a Law in themselves, though they don't have the Law. 15 They show the proof of the Law written on their hearts, and their consciences affirm it. Their conflicting thoughts will accuse them, or even make a defense for them, 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the hidden truth about human beings through Christ Jesus.

Reflect

One thing I can say about Paul, the author of this letter to the church in Rome- you can love him, you can dislike him, but you can not ignore him. He has been travelling around teaching and preaching about Jesus with such intensity that sometimes he sounds very inconsiderate. He has persecuted God's people for long and now that he has experienced God's love, he is committed to bringing as many people to experience that same love.

In today's passage he is focused on judgement. Who will be judged and how will they be judged? Have you ever been judged? I don't know about you, but I know that I do not like to be judged! I don't want anyone to judge me. Every person desires to be loved and accepted as they are. And because we desire to not be judged, we must be intentional in making sure those around us also feel loved, accepted and welcomed without judgement. Just desiring that everyone is loved and accepted will be like the faith without action that Paul is talking about in this passage.

As a famous quote reminds us, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Without action the intentions are meaningless. Our actions have the potential to change things. Our faith calls us to action. Our faith calls us to love. Our faith calls us to accept without judgement as we have been loved and accepted by God.

Respond

Spend some time in silent meditation allowing the scripture and the reflection to find grounding in your being.

Is there a word or a phrase that has resonated with you? Spend a few moments with that word/phrase.

What message does it have for you? How does it encourage you to ACT?

Try to pay more attention to the people around you today? Look at people without judgment about their looks or condition? Share a smile with random people walking by you. Help someone you might encounter during the day.

Rest

Divine Creator, as we journey through this season of Lent, open our hearts and our minds in a way that the scriptures we read reveal to us truths that we need to see today. Empower and embolden us to give feet to our prayers and action to our faith. In your holy name we ask, AMEN

About the Author



Rev. Alka Lyall is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church serving an urban congregation in Chicago. A mother of two grown sons, she enjoys crocheting and walking by Lake Michigan in her free time.

Small but Mighty

A Reflection for Wednesday, March 26 by Mary Rodriguez

Lectionary reading for 03/26/2025: [Psalm 29, Numbers 13:17-27, Luke 13:18-21](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Luke 13:18-21

Read

Luke 13:18-21 *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? 19 It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

The Parable of the Yeast

20 And again he said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

Reflect

In the passage leading up to today's reading, Jesus cures the woman he sees in front of him and she is able to praise God again. The leader of the synagogue becomes indignant because a healing was done on the Sabbath, holding onto the rules he knew to traverse religion and society. Jesus effectively calls out hypocrisy and then he shares what God's vision truly is.

The Garden of God can start out so small, but when tended, it grows and becomes so much greater than we would think possible. Like a tiny mustard seed becomes a large tree that can shelter many in its wide branches. Or like a small measure of yeast causes bread to rise and feed many. Even a small action may snowball. One voice can amplify and inspire a multitude.

How do we navigate the world in which we find ourselves? How are we to handle discouraging people and oppressive systems? How do we maneuver the crowds and the many who are desperate for help? What do we do when we are up against situations and needs that seem insurmountable?

We can help the person in front of us. We can call out hypocrisy around us. We can lift our voice in protest when needed. We can raise our souls in praise to celebrate small wins. We may shelter and provide a safe space for the vulnerable. We must effect change within our sphere of

influence and trust that the reach of God can and will still grow and rise up, even if it seems impossible now. May God's kingdom come on earth, even as it is in heaven.

Respond

What are the small acts you can do today? Watch for the mustard seed moments, and be encouraged that they can grow. Keep the faith and continue to work the yeast into the flour in front of you, and trust that it will work. No act of love is insignificant.

Rest

Our loving God, in your glory, may your name be praised.

May your Kingdom come, may your will be done, even here, though you may seem far away.

Give us each day what we need to sustain our life and our work.

Forgive us when we fail, and help us to call out but allow for restoration of those who have failed us.

Guide us in ways that are consistent with your lovingkindness, lest we be tempted to be filled with hatred, and deliver us from being consumed.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen

About the Author



Mary Rodriguez provides case management, working in health advocacy. She lives in Chicago with her wife. The majestic beauty of creation is like a salve, and they are so grateful to live by one of the world's Great Lakes.

Looking Forward to our Heavenly House

A Reflection for Thursday, March 27 by Rev. Elizabeth Jones

Lectionary reading for 3/27/2025: [Psalm 32; Joshua 4:1-13; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5](#)

Selected passage for reflection: 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5

Read

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5 *New Revised Standard Version*

4:16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, 18 because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5:1 For we know that, if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to be further clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3 for surely when we have been clothed in it[a] we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan under our burden because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 The one who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a down payment.

Reflect

Often when I was a teenager, and a number of times in my twenties and thirties, I went camping in state forests and with the Girl Scouts. This wasn't camping in a recreational vehicle, but real camping. In a real tent, with sleeping bags on the ground, where we would cook over a campfire. So, as I read what Paul says here in 2 Corinthians 5:1, I have some idea of what he's talking about.

Our frail human bodies are very much like tents – earthly tents. Yes, they can be knocked down, even flattened or ripped apart. I also serve as a hospice chaplain, so I see our dear patients on a regular basis, with their frail earthly tents becoming weaker, more and more dilapidated. I feel such tenderness and such pain for our patients and for their families as I watch over, and pray for, and journey with them. Week by week – our patients become less verbal, their cognitive impairment growing. Sometimes their physical bodies become more constricted and stiff, and finally enter transition. Into another world. The next place.

Yes. I very well understand what the Apostle Paul – a tentmaker, by trade – is talking about when he mentions that the earthly tent we live in will be destroyed. This happens to each one of us, sooner or later, and is part of the circle of life. And yet, in the next breath Paul speaks of the building from God, a house (a heavenly house!) not made with frail human hands.

Even though I have much respect for Habitat for Humanity (and I greatly honor the people who work on those houses, including the recently deceased President Carter, in his nineties!), the heavenly houses Paul talks of here are as different from these earthly dwellings as night is from day.

Just as each of us lives in a frail, earthly tent right now while we camp out on this earth, it won't be forever. No, when each of us dies, or expires, or passes over, we will be in a whole new world. A heavenly realm, where each one of us will inherit a custom-made building not made with human hands. I don't quite know what this structure will look like, but I'm not worried about it. I don't need to know. God knows, and God has it prepared and waiting for me. And, for you, too.

Respond

What is God calling you to do as we come to realize our earthly tents are temporary? Yes, we can look forward to our heavenly dwelling places! And, we can reach out right now with helpful hands and thankful hearts to each other. Many people in this world are having difficulty with their physical bodies, and need a helping hand. How can you help? How can you come alongside, and journey with our sisters and brothers in need? God willing, God will give you ideas and connect you with organizations and ministries that are already doing this helpful, God-honoring work. And, God bless you richly as we wait to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

Rest

Dear Lord, gracious God, we cannot thank You enough for the hope, for the promise of our future presence with You in heavenly places. We look forward to moving out of these frail, earthly tents into Your buildings, eternal in the heavens. And, help each of us to honor You, to do something in Your service, to help those who are the least of these, the people who are already experiencing the frailty of the earthly tent they are living in. We praise You for Your love, Your care and Your mercy bestowed on each of us. In Jesus' name, amen.

About the Author

The Rev. Elizabeth Jones is a hospice chaplain in Chicago, pastor of a tiny UCC congregation in the Chicago suburbs, and holds a certificate in Alcohol and Drug Counseling (CADC). Elizabeth loves to read, preach, do yoga, and putter about on the computer.

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Compelled by Christ

A Reflection for Friday, March 28 by Cindy M. Wu

Lectionary reading for 3/28/2025: [Psalm 32](#); [Joshua 4:14-24](#); [2 Corinthians 5:6-15](#)

Selected passage for reflection: 2 Corinthians 5:6-15 (NIV)

Read

2 Corinthians 5:6-15 (NIV)

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

¹¹ Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Reflect

My husband and I are not very handy. Growing up, our immigrant parents made us focus on academic study, rather than life skills and fixin’ things. So, I like to crack this joke about us being so heavenly focused (with ministry) that we are no earthly good.

Although I’m not “handy,” I do like to try and fix things. Like broken family dynamics and organizational inefficiencies and community injustices and, in my ministry context, integration struggles for refugees. At times, the world’s problems feel intractable, hopeless. And these days, I’ve been longing badly for heaven. Or, rather, as I look at the mess of this world, I just feel ready to leave it behind.

Indeed, the Apostle Paul acknowledges that we “would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). But here we remain. Paul reminds us that regardless of our

situation, the most important focus is to please the Lord, for one day we will all stand before him. As we wait for that day, our task is to persuade others to know the Lord and live for him.

Which brings me to my life verses, 2 Cor 5:14-15: “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” I claimed this as my life verse about a year after I put my faith in Christ because as a baby Christian, I wanted my faith to matter. I hadn’t been looking for God. No, I had felt drawn, wooed, and compelled to follow him. And that changed my life, my outlook, and my mission.

The word that stands out to me in 2 Cor 5:14 is “compels.” God was and is so real to me that I cannot help but believe. I also can’t help but desire that others would believe, too. This compelling love motivates me to not live for myself, but for Christ, who suffered, died, and rose again. While I long for heaven, I pray that my life would be worthy of my calling (Eph 4:1). I pray that I will not grow weary in doing good (Gal 6:9). I will continue to pray, “How long, O Lord?” (Ps 13) but until that day comes, may I live for Christ.

Respond

What is weighing you down these days? What are you asking God to “fix”? How do you sense God inviting you to trust him? And how is his love for you compelling you to respond?

Rest

Jesus, thank you for your magnetic love that compels us to live not for ourselves, but for you. May we trust in your power to one day make the world new and whole again. Like a craft being carried by the current of the river, may we rest in your arms and allow your love to carry us along in whatever mission you have given to each of us. Amen.

About the Author

Rev. Cindy M. Wu is co-founder and Director of Diaspora Ministries of [Mosaic Formation](#). As a “pastor to pastors,” her ministry focuses on serving the city and church at-large. Cindy has published books and chapter contributions on global Christianity and refugee welcome; she also dabbles in poetry. Get better acquainted at [cindymwu.com](#).



The Need for an Intercessor

A Reflection for Saturday, March 29 by Sandy De Jesus

Lectionary reading for 3/29/2025 [Psalm 32; Exodus 32:7-14; Luke 15:1-10](#)

Selected Passage for Reflection: Exodus 32:7-14

Read

Exodus 32:7-14, CSB

⁷The Lord spoke to Moses: “Go down at once! For your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly. ⁸They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them; they have made for themselves an image of a calf. They have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and said, ‘Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’” ⁹The Lord also said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰Now leave me alone, so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”

¹¹But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God: “Lord, why does your anger burn against your people you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and eliminate them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for your people. ¹³Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—you swore to them by yourself and declared, ‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴So the Lord relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people.

Reflect

How do you handle waiting? The space of time between your expectation and your promised reality? I think when we’re forced to wait, our insecurities begin to come out, and we often try to fill in the spaces where God seems to be silent. Certainly this was the way for the Israelites, who continually questioned whether God was truly going to fulfill his promises to them.

This is the backdrop where we find the people of God in Exodus 32. Even while Moses is on the mountain receiving instruction from God, the people have grown anxious, and they call on

Aaron to ‘make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt — we don’t know what has happened to him!’ (v. 2)

God informs Moses of what the people have done and Moses begins to intercede for the people.

- God appears to disown the Israelites ‘.. Your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly.’ (v. 7) Moses responds with ‘Why does Your anger burn against Your people You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand?’ (v. 11)
- When God offers to transfer the promise of Abraham to Moses, Moses reminds God of the surrounding nations who would claim that God has become a mockery in not fulfilling his promises (v. 12)
- Throughout this exchange and in the aftermath of the peoples’ sin, Moses doesn’t attempt to justify the actions of the Israelites or even suggest that they have done anything to deserve mercy. Moses even offers himself in exchange if God would forgive the people. (v. 32)

This interaction is a beautiful image of Jesus and his intercession for us. “(Jesus) humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross. For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow — of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth — and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. 2:8-11

Respond

In this season of Lent, may we look at how we try to fill in the spaces, where we claim to speak for God when he tells us to be silent and to wait.

- What are we raising up, even though it looks more like success than obedience?
- Who are we excluding, because they don’t seem to fit our tidy picture of faithfulness?
- May we serve others with the same mercy and compassion that God lavishes on us.

Rest

Our gracious God, thank you for your lovingkindness and compassion. Thank you for your Son, Jesus, for his intercession on our behalf and his sacrifice that we might have life, now and forever. Amen

About the Author



Sandra De Jesus is an ordained reverend with the [Federation of Christian Ministries](#). She currently works as a chaplain at a Level I trauma center in Phoenix, Arizona.

Taste and See God's Goodness

A Reflection for Sunday, March 30 by Rebekah Bolin

Lectionary reading for 3/30/2025: [Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32](#)

Selected Passage for Reflection: Psalm 34:8

Read

Psalm 34:8

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him." (NIV)

"Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see—how good God is. Blessed are you who run to him." (The Message)

Reflect

A few years ago I took my mom to my favorite sushi restaurant. It is hard to beat any restaurant in Japan as far as food perfection, but this one spot was an exception in the U.S. When my mom took her first bite, she looked up into my eyes with the most serious expression and said, "This...is...the...BEST...food...I...have...EVER...had...in...my...ENTIRE...life!!!" Her seriousness was accompanied by pure joy and delight. I couldn't help but laugh and feel my own sense of joy that someone else got to experience such goodness in real life.

The fourth Sunday in Lent is traditionally called "Laetare Sunday," which means "rejoice." It is roughly the halfway point in Lent and it is an opportunity to pause and celebrate. It is an intentional day to recognize God's goodness in the midst of the hard season of Lent.

Many things in life are hard. But God is *always* good. Laetare Sunday reminds us to recognize this. The Scripture reading for today also encourages us to experience this goodness first hand. The words "taste and see" in Hebrew mean to test and to perceive. In other words, to trial and to experience. The psalm is encouraging people to personally test and experience God's goodness for themselves, not just to talk about it in some lofty terms. Just like when my mom tasted the best food of her life, God's goodness ultimately brings pure joy and delight. It is a comfort beyond explanation.

The verse continues, blessed is the one who trusts in God. May you trust in God's goodness. May God's goodness shower you with joy and delight. May you say, "God...is...SO...good," with all seriousness, but with a deep joy that can only come from above.

Respond

The Scripture verse above is action oriented. It calls us to actively experience God's goodness. Think of something you can do today to bring you joy. This can be as simple as listening to your favorite music, reading a book for 10 minutes, or taking a hot shower. Or something like going for a walk, going to the movies, having dinner with loved ones, playing basketball, or going to a comedy show. Anything that actively brings joy. Take the time to intentionally do something joy-filled today. In the midst of it, rejoice that God has provided this opportunity for you. Continue to thank God for all the simple blessings and joys. Rejoice on this Laetare Sunday!

Rest

Dear God,

I thank you for your goodness! Even when times are hard, you are still good. I pray I can trust this goodness more and more each day. May I recognize and experience your goodness on a daily basis. I pray this goodness over my family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and community. In Jesus' name, amen.

About the Author



After growing up in Wisconsin, Rebekah graduated from Fuller Seminary and has lived in Los Angeles since 2006 (minus a year and a half of living on the Big Island of Hawaii). In 2018 she started and pastored a church in Downtown LA. The church has been on hold since covid, but the vision is still alive and well and she hopes to eventually start it back up. Until then she is out traveling as she works for a major U.S. airline. In her free time, she loves to travel, hike, put together jigsaw puzzles, try new food, play soccer, laugh around the dinner table with family and friends, and enjoy the adventures of life the Lord takes her on.

I Wish I Had Time For That

A Reflection for Monday, March 31 by Rev. Joy Fishler

Lectionary reading for 3/31/2025: [Psalm 53: Leviticus 23:26-41: Revelation 19:1-8](#)

Selected Passage for Reflection: Leviticus 23:26-41

Read

Leviticus 23:26-41

26 The Lord said to Moses, 27 “The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present a food offering to the Lord. 28 Do not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God. 29 Those who do not deny themselves on that day must be cut off from their people. 30 I will destroy from among their people anyone who does any work on that day. 31 You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. 32 It is a day of sabbath rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath.”

33 The Lord said to Moses, 34 “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. 35 The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. 36 For seven days present food offerings to the Lord, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the Lord. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work. 37 (“These are the Lord’s appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing food offerings to the Lord—the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. 38 These offerings are in addition to those for the Lord’s Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the Lord.) 39 “So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days; the first day is a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also is a day of sabbath rest. 40 On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees—from palms, willows and other leafy trees—and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.

Reflect

Is there a place you go that makes your heart come alive? Is it a hike on a mountain or your feet in the sand? There is a beach town in Northern California I love more than any other place I’ve ever been. When my car makes that final turn and I catch a glimpse of the ocean, my heart leaps. Once a year I schedule a 24 hour “solo” at this very place. I walk the beach, pray, worship

and rest in the presence of God. I read Scripture. My eyes and my heart lean into Jesus, only Jesus. I eat fresh fish tacos or crab that was sold at the docks. It is a day where my body, heart and mind are refreshed because I'm centered around the one thing, Jesus. This has been a rhythm in my life for over twenty years. If I don't schedule this day months in advance, this day wouldn't happen. Do you know why? There is never a good time to go. Not only that, it's a day I have to protect and sometimes fight for. Year over year, something undoubtedly important comes up and I have to say no to the good so that I can say yes to the best.

My calendar tells me who, what, where and when. If something doesn't make it onto the calendar, it probably doesn't happen. If I don't put the kid's schedule on there the chances are pretty high that I will forget. My calendar is basically the boss of me and I like it that way. More than that, at the beginning of each year I ask the pastoral staff team to give me all the dates for all things ministry and I create one master calendar. It doesn't mean we don't tweak it as we go or add and subtract things but it creates a rhythm which keeps us unified and on point.

However, the calendar doesn't just tell me what I need to do, but it tells me what I get to do because if I don't put it on the calendar, it probably isn't going to happen. Again, there probably isn't time for *that*. After I read this passage in Leviticus I thought to myself, "God just put items on their calendar." He says each year I want you to be refreshed. I want you to bring what is crushing you, I want to give you freedom and rest. These are good and healthy rhythms that I am giving you to abide in. Mark your calendars, do this on this day and then do that. God gets that if it isn't scheduled, it probably isn't happening and it's too important not to happen. It's necessary.

Respond

These yearly festivals brought life and healing to the people of God. Sabbaths were not optional. God designed us to need them, to need Him. Sabbath wasn't an invitation, it was a commandment. It still is. A day to be refreshed in Jesus. A day to let go of "shoulds" and a day to be or do what makes your heart come alive. It isn't a day of what we shouldn't do, but a day of what we get to do! It is a day meant for us, not us for the day (Mark 2:27). What does your calendar look like? Are there weekly items on your calendar that beckon rest and refreshment? Are there yearly scheduled dates that bring you to the feet of Jesus? Are there regular practices and times set aside for repentance and worship? If not, it might not be happening. What is on your calendar and do you need to make some adjustments?

Rest

Jesus, teach me how to live more like you. Forgive me for not honoring you with my time and energy. Forgive me for living like I don't need rest, the kind of rest that only you can give. Would you teach me how to do that? I give you my calendar. I give you my heart. I give you my life. Have your way in and through me, in Jesus name.

About the Author



Joy Fishler is an Ordained Minister in the Evangelical Covenant Church. She currently resides with her family in the Sacramento Area and is the Pastor of Adult Ministry at Life Community Church. She loves Jesus, loves people and absolutely loves raising her teenage girls. She has a passion for preaching and leading people to the heart of the Father. She truly believes that there is nothing better than Jesus and following Him is the only life worth living.
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We are Called to be People of Jubilee

A Reflection for Tuesday, April 1 by Sarah Roquemore Day

Lectionary reading for 4/1/2025: [Psalm 53; Leviticus 25:1-19; Revelation 19:9-10](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Leviticus 25 1-19

Read

Leviticus 25:1-19 English Standard Version

The Sabbath Year

25 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD. **3** For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, **4** but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. **5** You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. **6** The Sabbath of the land^[a] shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves^[b] and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, **7** and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.

The Year of Jubilee

8 “You shall count seven weeks^[c] of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. **9** Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. **10** And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. **11** That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. **12** For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.^[d]

13 “In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. **14** And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another. **15** You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. **16** If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of the crops that he is selling to you. **17** You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God.

18 “Therefore you shall do my statutes and keep my rules and perform them, and then you will dwell in the land securely. **19** The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and dwell in it securely.

Reflect

In this passage from Leviticus, God lays out some radical commands regarding Israel’s economy and social structure. Every seven years, the people are to take a year-long sabbatical, forgoing productivity and profit in favor of rest for both the land and the workers. Then, after 49 years, the people are called to extend the sabbatical for a second year of agricultural rest. This 50th year, the Jubilee year, was to be a year of *release*, in which property lines were reset and those who had amassed additional land were expected to return it to its original owners. In addition, anyone who had been enslaved because of a debt (a common practice in ancient times) was to be released from captivity.

In an agrarian society, where wealth was gained by owning and cultivating land, these regulations would have ensured that resources were evenly distributed and that no one family or tribe could amass too much. Reflecting God’s care for all humanity, these laws protected the poor and disempowered and provided hope for those who had lost property or become enslaved due to hard times or bad deals. Furthermore, the ideals of Sabbath and Jubilee served as a reminder of God’s provision of the promised land and reinforced the hope of a return to Eden, where people lived in community with one another and God, eating freely from the land.

Looking at these passages in the context of our current world, where 1% of the population owns over 50% of global wealth, and 50% of the population owns less than 1%, I grieve how far we have strayed from God’s vision of Jubilee. As I was preparing to write this devotional, my 7th-grade students were learning about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discussing ways to advocate for human rights worldwide. I couldn’t help but wonder how many violations against humanity would not exist if the world lived according to God’s commands to observe Sabbatical and Jubilee years. Sadly, greed and sin continually keep us from flourishing equitably as God intended.

Even the ancient Israelites, who first received these commands directly from God on Mount Sinai, failed to meet the standard. While the instructions for Sabbatical and Jubilee years are codified multiple times in the Torah (See [Exodus 20-21](#) and [Deuteronomy 15](#)), there is no historical record that these laws were ever fully observed by the people of Israel. God even predicts the people’s negligence in the next chapter of Leviticus ([Lev. 26: 34-35, 43](#)), where it is implied that the failure to uphold this command will cause Israel’s eventual exile.

So how should we, as contemporary Christians, engage with these seemingly impossible commands? We can start by remembering that Jesus declared himself to be the fulfillment of the law. In [Luke 4](#), Jesus returns to his hometown in Nazareth and reads from Isaiah, proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” and heralding “good news for the poor and oppressed.” In Luke’s narrative, this declaration comes right after Jesus’ temptation in the

desert, where he resists the lure of worldly power, status, and wealth. Jesus was not interested in the ruling powers of earth, where empires expand through violence and power grows through oppression. Rather, Jesus lived an upside-down life of outrageous generosity, hospitality, liberation, and release, uplifting the marginalized and challenging those whose instinct was to hoard wealth and exclude the poor.

Embodied in Jesus, Jubilee becomes more than just a set of commands for an ancient agrarian nation. Jesus's life is the paragon for living counter-culturally in a world inclined to commodify and exploit human life. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be people of Jubilee, committed to living lives marked by rest, generosity, and care for the earth and its people.

Respond

Inherent in the call of Jubilee, is the idea of rest and *release*. In order to fully rest in God's grace, we must be willing to let go of our power, our wealth, even our independence.

Questions to consider:

- Where do you find yourself wrestling with the instinct to choose self-preservation and control over generosity and trust in God's provision?
- What abundance is God calling you to release? How can giving back your wealth contribute to the liberation and flourishing of those trapped in cycles of poverty, injustice, and oppression?
- In what ways do you participate in or uphold inequitable systems? What power do you have to make changes and advocate for policies and practices that uphold God's upside-down values? How can you commit to advocating for jubilee practices within your spheres of influence?
- The practice of Sabbatical and Jubilee years provided rest and release not only for humans, but to the earth as well. What are ways you can work towards the restoration and healing of our physical world?

Rest

God of Jubilee,

We long for your vision of Eden on earth. A place where all are invited to rest, where slaves are liberated, and food is available to all.

We were created for goodness, for community, for trust, and yet we fall short. Forgive us of the ways we have not trusted in your provision. For the ways we have failed to release the abundance you have given us, hoarding our wealth and choosing self-protection over generosity towards those less fortunate than us.

Empower us to fight for liberation and the release of debt, and grant us your mercy and rest as we seek to enlarge your kingdom and reject the oppressive systems of this world. Transform our hearts and habits, so that we may reflect your vision of Jubilee for the world.

Amen

About the Author



Sarah Roquemore Day is a middle school drama teacher who sometimes writes, too. Growing up, she drove Sunday school teachers and youth pastors crazy with her constant questions and need for further information. Today, she continues to be curious about the complex nuances of scripture and theology, reading the Bible critically while staying open to the mystery and wonder of the Holy Spirit. Sarah lives in Atlanta, Georgia with her husband Bob. She has recently entered her auntie era and loves doting on her precious nieces, Kellyn and Kai-Ling.

God is Still God

A Reflection for Wednesday, April 2 by Jillian Evans

Lectionary reading for April 02, 2025: [Psalm 53](#); [2 Kings 4:1-7](#); [Luke 9:10-17](#);

Selected passage for reflection: Luke 9:10-17

Read

Luke 9:10-17, New International Version

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

10 When the disciples returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, **11** but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. **12** Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.” **13** He replied, “You give them something to eat.” They answered, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” **14** (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” **15** The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. **16** Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. **17** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve baskets full of broken pieces that were left over.

Reflect

Currently, we are living in a political climate that has major changes almost daily. Regardless of how we feel about the current administration, one theme that we can agree on is the uncertainty of the state of our union. At the time of this writing, the nation was dealing with plane crashes and uncertainty of employment for our federal workers. Our political parties are miles apart in how they view a future for the United States, making bipartisan agreements extremely challenging. I have no idea what the future holds for our country and its people but God does. We as Christians cannot forget that God is still in control.

In today’s scripture selection, we see the disciples working alongside Jesus. In this chapter, we see the disciples go from just observing Jesus’ ministry to participating in His mission. They had previously witnessed His power and understood his capabilities. However, in this passage they questioned Jesus. The disciples wanted Jesus to send the people to get some food. Jesus replied by telling the disciples to give the people food. Remember that this was Jesus talking

and yet the disciples told Him that they didn't think it was enough. I imagine that in today's language, Jesus would have told them "I said what I said." But what actually happened was He looked up to Heaven, gave thanks, and had the disciples distribute the food. It should be no surprise that there was not just enough food but there were twelve baskets of food left over.

The disciples had been following Jesus and relying on the hospitality of others but were uncertain on that day how their provisions would be met. They initially relied on their earthly ways to come to a solution, but Jesus looked to Heaven for their provisions. Life is not much different for us today. As we are living in unprecedented times, we do not know what each day will bring. But if we keep our spiritual eyes turned to Heaven, God will provide.

Respond

Visualize for a moment- What would it look like if you walked around with an attitude of victory in the midst of a storm? What would you wear? What would you say? How can your trial change into a testimony about the goodness of God?

For deeper thought: What did it mean to you when you read "God is still God"? What have you been crying out to God about? What does the Bible say about your situation? Are there any lessons that God is teaching you along the way? Can you think of a time that God brought you through a trying time?

Rest

Dear God,

I come humbly before you in all of my imperfections to honor you Lord God Almighty. O God, You are my God; with deepest longing I will seek You. God, please forgive me where I have wronged and teach me Your ways. As I look forward to the Easter celebration, please help me to remember your faithfulness to me and the gift of Your Son Jesus.

In Jesus' name

Amen

About the Author

Jillian Evans resides in Chicago, Illinois with her husband and one of her three adult children. She is passionate about ministering to children, youth, and their families. Jillian holds degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and North Park Theological Seminary as well as a certificate in Spiritual Direction from C. John Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction at NPTS.



To Whom You Belong

A Reflection for Thursday, April 3 by Seanna Wong

Lectionary reading for 03/03/2025: [Psalm 126](#); [Isaiah 43: 1-7](#); [Philippians 2:19-24](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Isaiah 43:1-7

Read

Isaiah 43:1-7 NIV

Israel's Only Savior

1 But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life.

5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.

6 I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—

7 Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”
The Savior of Israel.

Reflect

Throughout time, humans have sought to understand who we are.

What defines us? Is it our work? Our hobbies? The relationships we have?

We often try to find meaning in what we do, where we live, or who we're connected to. But what happens when those things no longer feel like they define us? What if they aren't enough to fully capture who we are?

Isaiah 43:1-7 offers a different perspective. Instead of looking outward for our identity, God gives us a clear reminder of who we truly are: His creation—*beloved, honored, and precious*.

The passage begins with a declaration: "I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine." These words speak directly to us. Not that we are merely numbers among God's flock, but that we are claimed and known by a Father.

God is not an absentee parent—there for creation but knows nothing about you. He knows every facet of us and more than we know about ourselves. This reality runs deeper than any job title, hobby, or relationship. Our identity isn't tied to ephemeral places and things or what the world tries to impose on us. Our identity is rooted in the love and purpose God has for us.

God understands how easily the world can try to shape our identity. The distractions of life, the pressures to conform, and the constant need to prove ourselves can pull us away from the truth of who we are. But in the face of those challenges, we are commanded not to fear, for God offers us a promise: When the floodwaters rise, we will not be swept away. When the fire burns, we will not be consumed. These promises remind us that, no matter what comes, God's love and presence are steadfast, and we are safe in His hands where nothing can or will ever tear us away from Him.

Within the passage, God also reminds us of the immense value He places on us. He says, "I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba [areas part of modern day Ethiopia and Sudan] in your stead." These were powerful and wealthy nations whose wealth and influence are nothing compared to His people. We are more precious in God's eyes than what the world assigns worth to, and He has gone to great lengths for our redemption—a price ultimately paid through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His love for us is worth more than anything in the world.

As the passage continues, we see God calling His scattered people back to Himself. He's not just claiming us; He's also bringing us home. In His love, we aren't meant to wander aimlessly. We are called to find our identity, our purpose, and ultimately our rest in Him.

Isaiah 43 reminds us that this world will never know who we are—we can't even define who we are on our own. Yet, there is a God—living and eternal—who takes the time to call to us, sit with us, and like the Samaritan woman at the well, tell us all about ourselves so we may believe in His steadfast love.

We are not defined by our work, relationships, or accomplishments. We are defined by the only God who saves. We are His beloved children, redeemed and treasured. We belong to the One who created us, and in that truth, we find our deepest fulfillment.

Respond

Do you ever question your true identity? In the chaos of life, it's easy to forget who we really are. Isaiah 43:1-7 reminds us: We belong to God. He has called us by name, and we are His.

God, the Creator of the universe, treasures you deeply. In a world that tries to define us by what we do or have, God's love for us remains unchanging. He values you more than anything, even willing to give up nations for your redemption.

Take a moment to ask the Lord: Who am I in Your eyes?

Ask Him to reveal how deeply He loves you and how precious you are in His sight. His love for you is constant, and in Him, your identity is secure.

You are defined not by your circumstances but by God's unshakeable love. You are His beloved child, redeemed and cherished, and nothing can change that.

Rest

Lord,

Thank You for Your constant safeguard over my life. Thank You for forming me, naming me, and knowing me more deeply than I know myself.

Because of Your perfect knowledge and omniscience over every facet of my life and Your creation, I ask for Your guidance and strength to grow in trust during life's storms. Remind me, Lord, of just how capable and powerful You are.

You alone know the true weight of the fires that have come to destroy and the waters that have flooded my dreams, my hopes, and the plans I've made. You alone understand how hard it's been. In those moments of pain and loss, I lean on Your understanding, knowing that You see what I cannot.

When my hope wavers, Lord, please strengthen my faith. When fear overwhelms me, remind my heart of Your victories and Your faithfulness. Let my life be a testimony to Your goodness, and may I never forget the ways You have shown Your love and care for me in the past.

Just as You remembered Your people and heard their cries in Scripture, hear my cry today, O God. Remember me in my weakness. Save me, redeem me, and bring me to a place of rest in Your presence.

I trust that in Your perfect timing, You will turn my trials into testimonies of Your grace. I place my life, my dreams, and my heart in Your hands, knowing that You are faithful to fulfill Your promises. Allow me to rest in you.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

About the Author



Seanna Wong, M.B.A, is a Miami, Florida native who writes on faith, womanhood, and identity in a clamoring world. When she's not working, writing – or avoiding either of the two– Seanna is either reading, watching mysteries, or working on her cooking vlog. You can read more of Seanna's work here:

<https://medium.com/@seannawrites>.

Voices

A Reflection for Friday, April 4 by Melanie Marie Myatt

Lectionary reading for 04/04/2025: [Psalm 126](#); [Isaiah 43:8-15](#); [Philippians 2:25-3:1](#)

Selected passage for reflection: [Isaiah 43.8-15](#)

Read

Isaiah 43.8-15 *NRSV*

Bring forth the people who are blind yet
have eyes,
who are deaf yet have ears!

Let all the nations gather together,
and let the peoples assemble.
Who among them declared this
and foretold to us the former things?
Let them bring their witnesses to justify
them,
and let them hear and say, "It is true."

You are my witnesses, says the Lord,
and my servant whom I have chosen,
so that you may know and believe me
and understand that I am he.
Before me no god was formed,
nor shall there be any after me.

I, I am the Lord,
and besides me there is no savior.

I am the one who declared and saved and
proclaimed,
not some strange god among you;
you are my witnesses, says the Lord, and
I am God.

Indeed, since that day I am he;
there is no one who can deliver from my
hand;
I work, and who can hinder it?
Thus says the Lord,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
For your sake I will send to Babylon
and break down all the bars,
and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be
turned to lamentation.

I am the Lord, your Holy One,
the Creator of Israel, your King.
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Reflect

I am struggling with voices. With social media, podcasts, and newsletters, I feel like everyone has an opinion on just about everything. And they don't just state their opinions humbly for my consideration. Instead I feel like they are shouting at me: Do something! Call someone! Make a change! Speak out! Speak up! Stay silent! Go! Stay! Act! Rest! Wait! Don't wait!

I'm a little bit exhausted.

But when I read passages like the one given to us today, I can feel the voices getting quieter. Isaiah describes the voices of those who predict the future or make other prognostications. But

it is only God's voice that can predict the future, and only God can make the predictions come true.

I think some of our country's problems result from wanting a strong leader who can be our savior. But God says in this passage, "I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior." We aren't any different than the people of Israel when we look elsewhere for a savior for rescue.

In Israel's case, God explains that the plan is for Babylon to defeat Israel and carry them into exile. Isaiah predicted this years before it happened. But God's plan is also to rescue Israel from Babylon through their defeat by Persia.

We may look at some of our world leaders and long for God to put someone else in their place. But God tells us to trust God's plan. God alone is the one who declares and saves and proclaims. The best thing we can do is listen to God's voice, and let all the other competing voices fade away.

This won't be easy. It won't even necessarily be immediately satisfactory. But we can trust that God's steadfast love endures forever.

Respond

Hold out your hands and imagine you are holding all your frustrations with everything that is wrong with our world. Show them to God. Now, turn your hands over. Imagine that you have given everything to God. Listen quietly for God's response to you.

Rest

Oh Loving, Holy God. Everywhere we look we see chaos and confusion. But you are a God of order and certainty. Give us eyes to see all the ways that your hand is at work both in and through ourselves and in the world. Please bring peace to the places that have no peace. Bring order and light to the places that are disordered and full of darkness. Work in our hearts so we can trust in you even when all we can see are reasons not to trust. We know you are a good and loving God. Give us the ability to believe that is true and to share that truth with others who are struggling.

About the Author

Melanie Myatt currently works as a chaplain at a retirement community in Glenview, Illinois and as program assistant for the C. John Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction. She is also a spiritual director, writer, mom of four, and master of the 15-minute nap. If you like her writing, you can also find her on [Substack](#).



Lost but Found – God Restores

A Reflection for Saturday, April 5 by Rev. Dr. Cynthia P. Stewart

Lectionary Readings: Psalm 126; Exodus 12:21-27; John 11:45-57

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 126

Read

Psalm 126

A Harvest of Joy

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
3 The Lord has done great things for us,

and we rejoiced.

4 Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
5 May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
6 Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Reflect

Have you ever lost something, and you looked everywhere to try to find it? You are searching through the seams of your couch, in between your car seats, looking in every coat and jean pockets and to no avail, the item still seems lost. Finally, you just stop, pray, sit still and ask the Holy Spirit to bring back to remembrance the last place you had the item. It is then that you look over at the table and there is the item you were looking for. That was me a few weeks ago. Like the Psalmist in this scripture, my mouth was full of laughter, because all I had to do was STOP, PRAY, and BE STILL.

These last few years since the start of the pandemic, I have learned to stop, to pray, to be still, and recognize all the great things God has done in my life. When I wanted to give up, throw in the towel, and continue to ask God, “How long is this going to last?” But while asking that question, God reminded me, “the joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10).” As I continued to confess and pray that scripture, it was then that God restored everything I thought I had lost during such a turbulent time of my life; ending a marriage of 21 years, losing friends I thought would be there through my every thick and thin, and wrestling with what is next. But God! What I sowed in tears these last few years, I am now reaping the seeds that I have sown. I can sing with JOY, that the harvest has come and that “The Lord has done great things for me.” This is the year of everything being made NEW, God is restoring all my fortunes.

Respond

So, what or who have you lost? Take time to bring it before God. Stop searching and asking others but BE STILL and seek God. Grab your journal and find your quiet space. Look at this [picture](#) and play this [song](#) then imagine meeting Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39), remember his friends could not stay awake, but he prayed and asked God, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Reflect on what is speaking to you. Then read Psalm 126 again and reflect on all the good things God has done for you and let the JOY of God fill you.

Rest

God, may you bring me to a place of Joy that I experience every morning, and may I always remember the great things you have done for me when I end my day. In Jesus Name, Amen.

About the author



Rev. Dr. Cynthia P. Stewart is an intercessory prayer leader who has been facilitating a 5 am Wednesday Morning prayer call with women since 2018. She recently completed the Advanced Spiritual Direction Internship through Loyola University Chicago where she also works. Called the “urban theologian” she loves to expose her students to the diversity of Chicago neighborhoods and while there must try some food options, because she is a foodie. She holds graduate degrees from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary (PhD & MTS) and North Park Evangelical Theological Seminary (M.Div. & MA).

A Way in the Wilderness

A Reflection for Sunday, April 6 by Esther Knicely Baine

Lectionary reading for 04/06/2025: [Fifth Sunday in Lent Isaiah 43:16-21, Psalm 126, Philippians 3:4b-14, John 12:1-8](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Isaiah 43:16-21

Read

Isaiah 43:16-21 - *NRSV*

16 Thus says the LORD,
 who makes a way in the sea,
 a path in the mighty waters,
17 who brings out chariot and horse,
 army and warrior;
 they lie down; they cannot rise;
 they are extinguished, quenched like a
 wick:
18 Do not remember the former things
 or consider the things of old.
19 I am about to do a new thing;

now it springs forth; do you not
 perceive it?
 I will make a way in the wilderness
 and rivers in the desert.
20 The wild animals will honor me,
 the jackals and the ostriches,
 for I give water in the wilderness,
 rivers in the desert,
 to give drink to my chosen people,
21 the people whom I formed for myself
 so that they might declare my praise.

Reflect

One of the recurring themes in the story of God and Israel is the danger of forgetting. When the Israelites fail to pass down the stories of God's faithfulness to the next generation, they easily fall into the slavery of idolatry. How true this is for us as well. As we reflect and share what God has done, our faith is strengthened and belief grows.

The author of Isaiah understood this well, reminding the reader that God actively works on behalf of those who love Him (Isaiah 64:4, Romans 8:28).

Consider the story of the Red Sea in Exodus:

"God did not lead [the Israelites] by way of the land of the Philistines, although it was nearer; for God thought, 'If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt.' So God

led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.” (Exodus 13:17-18, NRSV)

The author of Isaiah reminds Israel that God, in His wisdom, leads His people on the best path to freedom—even when it doesn’t appear to be the most direct route. He knew that facing war too soon might drive the Israelites back to the very oppression they were escaping. Instead, He took them on a journey designed with their ultimate good in mind. As Isaiah later writes:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.” (Isaiah 55:8)

What a relief to know that God is God, and we are human. We are not in control, and the burden to map out our own destiny does not solely reside on us. It is this freedom from trying to control our own destiny that liberates us from our own anxieties, our own fear from the “what ifs” and allows us to embrace our limitations. We do not know it all.

“Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.” (Isaiah 43:18)

What is holding you captive—fear, worry, doubt? Pay attention to the new thing God is doing. He is making a way in the wilderness, reminding His people that the old order—oppression, despair, scarcity, anxiety—is being replaced with something new.

And yet... Is there water in a desert or a pathway in the wilderness? Should we really be going the roundabout way? It doesn’t seem logical. Will an ostrich and a jackal—symbols of desolation and wild unpredictability—a flightless bird and a cunning wild animal—bring honor to God? Is it possible?

Or can we allow the memory of God’s past faithfulness and the hope for a new world order guide us? Can we live more fully into our purpose as a people created for abundant flourishing and free lives, in God?

This is an everyday struggle and the world around us does little to encourage this hope. And yet as the author of Isaiah points out, we cannot easily see beyond the standard order of deserts devoid of rivers and roundabout directions that lead us to a seeming dead end. Perhaps God is inviting us to shift our perspective; to keep hope alive; to trust in a different kind of logic; to remember that the kingdom of God plays by a different rule book. Remember that ultimately, “[we] Christians believe that the crucifixion of Christ—utter powerlessness—is his greatest moment of power...it is a paradox, a dilemma and finally becomes a choice” [Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs*]. Today live into that choice, choosing hope and light and reliance on God over the more readily available and cynical perspective of this world.

Respond

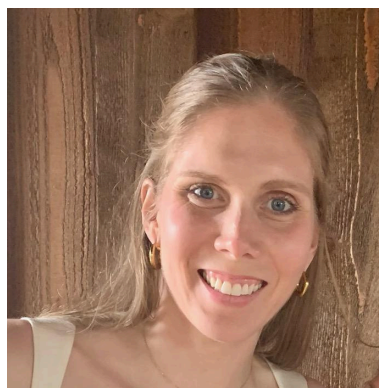
Take a moment to think of the ways that you are living far from freedom and relying on your own limited perspective or the perspective of the world to inform the way you think about things and/or make choices. Sit in silence for a few moments and listen for the invitation from the Spirit inviting you into a “new thing” that is springing forth. Perhaps you cannot yet see it but you can hear the birthing of its seedling.

Rest

Father, Son and Spirit we invite you to give us eyes to see the world as you see it. To revel in the nooks and crannies, the mess of the unfinished and the roundabout way. Show us how to be present in times of sorrow and in times of joy. And always remind us of the deep knowledge of you being a God who acts for those who wait on him.

Amen.

About the Author



Esther Knicely Baine lives in Atlanta with her two daughters and husband. She has served in vocational ministry among those on the margins of society for about 8 years, but aside from some volunteer work, she is currently on a hiatus. She is most passionate about how God’s love meets all people and his redemptive purposes often play out contrary to the ways we initially imagine.

Hang On, It's A Wild Ride

A Reflection for Monday, April 7 by Jeannette Conver

Lectionary reading for 04/07/2025: [Psalm 20](#); [Exodus 40:1-15](#); [Hebrews 10:19-25](#);

Selected passage for reflection: Hebrews 10:19-25

Read

Hebrews 10:19-25 New Living Translation

¹⁹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰ By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. ²¹ And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, ²² let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

²³ Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. ²⁴ Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. ²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

Reflect

The writer of Hebrews gifts us with such encouragement in a time we may feel our faith failing. What is the remedy for our distress or despair? Well, we begin by noticing how many times these verses repeat "let us." Right away we realize we are not meant to struggle alone. The author's practical advice follows with several instructions. First, we are told to go right into God's presence with sincere and trusting hearts. The God who holds the world in his hands listens to us; gives us an audience.

Second, we are advised to hold tightly to the hope in which we believe. Why? Because we can trust that our God is a keeper of promises. Others may fail to live up to their promises, but God never fails. The fulfillment may take longer than we would like, but God never turns us away when we cry out for help.

Third, we read that we are to find ways to motivate one another to love and good works. "Wait...you want me to think about loving and serving others when I feel miserable? Impossible!" you say. "I can barely get out of bed sometimes." But think...Aren't you energized by hearing someone else's dream of caring for a neighbor? Aren't you inspired when you work with a group on a project that's bigger than any one of you? How is your heart moved when you sing and pray and read Scripture with unified voices in worship? This mutual motivation really works, doesn't it?

The last recommendation describes what happens when we make it a habit to be with other believers. We get together for work, for a meal, to worship and our eyes are lifted from just ourselves. Verse 25 reminds us to listen to one another's stories of God's spirit at work in our lives and be encouraged. We tell our stories of struggle or joy and others offer comfort and companionship on our pathway.

We can have hope even though we may feel like our world is turned upside down and inside out... We can still have hope when grief, fear, despair, or pain have us in their grip. We can still have hope and have confidence to approach God even when the ground underneath our feet has fallen away and all our certainties have blown away. I need to hear these words right now!

Respond

Talk to God confidently about your anxieties and struggles. Which sister or brother in Christ might have a story, a word of encouragement, or a shoulder to lean on? Call to mind a time recently when someone has cared for you in practical ways. Thank God for them and thank them!

Rest

Creator God, strengthen our grip on your promises. Sometimes we lose sight of you. Holy Spirit, remind us that God is faithful, never failing. Whether we are in seasons of joy or sorrow, lack nothing or are in need- anchor our hearts and minds in your love. And remind us to encourage others in your love. Amen

About the author



Rev. Jeannette Conner is a pastor, preacher, mentor, coach, and advocate. Besides enjoying the beautiful North Cascades, she loves to encourage other clergywomen. She has a husband, four adult children, and two grandchildren. She adopted two kitties almost a year ago and enjoys being Mom of a Siamese and a tabby.

The Lord Hears Our Cry

A Reflection for Tuesday, April 8 by Natasha Westerhoud

Lectionary reading for 04/08/2025: Psalm 20; Judges 9:7-15; 1 John 2:18-28

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 20

Read

Psalm 20 (NLT)

1 In times of trouble, may the Lord answer your cry.

May the name of the God of Jacob keep you safe from all harm.

2 May he send you help from his sanctuary and strengthen you from Jerusalem.

3 May he remember all your gifts and look favorably on your burnt offerings.

4 May he grant your heart's desires and make all your plans succeed.

5 May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory and raise a victory banner in the name of our God.

May the Lord answer all your prayers.

6 Now I know that the Lord rescues his anointed king.

He will answer him from his holy heaven and rescue him by his great power.

7 Some nations boast of their chariots and horses,

but we boast in the name of the Lord our God.

8 Those nations will fall down and collapse, but we will rise up and stand firm.

9 Give victory to our king, O Lord! Answer our cry for help.

Reflect

Often, in my journey of hardship, I am reminded of Psalm 20 and God's assurance that He indeed hears our prayers and delivers us from our struggles. No matter how daunting and complicated the situations I encounter, I am encouraged to place my trust in the name of the Lord. There is a faith story I share with my daughter; it was a time when we were in China, waiting for her paperwork to be accepted and completed. On one occasion, while away from our hotel room, we faced a huge setback. Our hotel room caught fire due to faulty wiring, and we realized with dismay that our daughter's adoption paperwork was in that room. I cannot express how defeated and terrified we were as we drove back. This paperwork was essential for us to enter back into Canada. My mind started spiraling as I asked myself, Would I become a mother to this precious child? Why did I leave the paperwork in the room? In times of trouble, will the Lord hear my cries? Will the Lord keep us safe? Will the paperwork be intact? We prayed to

God, offering all we had, asking Him to protect what needed to be protected. As I entered the room, my eyes fell upon the locked briefcase, intact with a dry circle around it, while the rest of the room lay in ruins. God protected what needed to be protected. We prayed to God to answer us in our day of trouble, and He sent help from His sanctuary. We gave victory to our King as He responded to our cries for help.

Respond

Psalm 20 is a powerful prayer of trust, hope, and assurance. It outlines the request for divine protection, the confidence in God compared to worldly strength, and the celebration of anticipated answers to prayer. The Psalm beautifully captures the essence of God's promise to those who persistently trust in Him. How have you navigated your days of hardship while embracing this truth? I encourage you to seek His guidance in times of distress by prioritizing prayer and looking for God's direction.

Rest

Lord, we find comfort in knowing that when we call upon your name, we can count on your strength and protection. We are grateful that you send help from your sanctuary to sustain us. We confidently place our hopes and plans for our lives in your loving hands. May Your will be done as we trust in you. Amen.

About the Author



Natasha is in her final steps of Ordination with the ECC (June 2025), and her 25 years of extensive career in ministry and experience serving as pastor, chaplain, and counsellor leads her to exciting adventures and opportunities worldwide. Natasha serves alongside the Evangelical Covenant Church of Canada as a Serve Global trip facilitator for Ecuador and currently serves as a chaplain within her community in Canada. She also has a private practice which offers Christian mental health care, focusing on early childhood trauma. Natasha celebrates 27 years of marriage to Mike, and together, they have two beautiful children, Hana and Eli. Their family story is a unique journey of

waiting on God and travelling miles across the ocean to bring their children home. For Natasha, the key is to embrace life to the fullest, no matter what season God puts her in, never to stop learning or growing, and always to strive to meet people where they are at. Her purpose is to live an extraordinary life in the ordinary and to be reminded each day that we are all “just walking each other home.” (Ram Dass)

Invitation to Pay Attention

A Reflection for Wednesday, April 9 by Rev. Beth Knight, MAPC

Lectionary reading for 04/09/2025: Psalm 29; Habakkuk 3:2-15; Luke 18:31-34

Selected passage for reflection: Luke 18:31-34

Read

Luke 18:31-34 (1599 Geneva Bible)

31 Then Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be fulfilled to the Son of man, that are written by the Prophets.

32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shall be spiteful entreated, and shall be spitted on.

33 And when they have scourged him, they will put him to death: but the third day he shall rise again.

34 But they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither perceived they the things which were spoken.

Reflect

Do you ever wonder why the twelve disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying? Perhaps they were “flooded” (a psychological term for being overwhelmed by too much). Perhaps they were in disbelief that what he spoke of would really happen. Maybe their limited perceptions were the brain’s way of protecting them from grief. We see this often when we are present to others facing death of a beloved: they just don’t grasp that it’s upon them. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, pioneer in the study of death and dying, named this stage of grief as denial. It wasn’t too soon for the disciples to be grieving. We know now that walking alongside another who won’t be with us long is known as “anticipatory grief”. So as bewildering as it might feel to us, from our lens in history, to look back and wonder at the twelve, we can also have much compassion for them.

Regardless of why the twelve did not perceive what Jesus said to them for the third time, there is also this for us to ponder: that this passage was the third time Jesus spoke of what was to come. Not only does Luke tell us about this, so does Matthew 20:17-19. Reference to three (third) is something found hundreds of times in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Jewish world and ancient contexts, three is a symbol of completeness. Even as early as Jesus’ birth, three is represented by the three gifts of the Magi. The three stages in Jesus’ ministry are his birth, life and resurrection. In the Garden of Gethsemane, before Jesus’ arrest, he prayed and

three times asked his disciples to stay awake. Peter's denial of Christ three times before the rooster crowed is another example we sadly remember. At the crucifixion are three crosses. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. The Holy Trinity of our faith is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; which Jesus instructed be the naming used when baptizing as stated in Matthew 28:19. The Transfiguration of Jesus was witnessed by Peter, James and John. Three Patriarchs of the Old Testament are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Further back in Genesis we know the account of creation where God created the heavens, earth and all living things. With so many symbols of completeness we can see that Jesus in this "third" instance of telling of the future was leaving a remarkable and poignant message for not just the disciples but for us as well. Seeing these frequent patterns in the Bible emphasizes for us to pay attention.

To what and to whom should we pay attention? We are invited to pay attention to all the "threes" of scripture and especially to how Jesus fulfilled prophecy and completed the gift of liberation for us. Lent is a time to deeply pay attention and especially to this scripture today as it reminds us of the poignancy of completion. And, since we still are on this earthly plane in the suspended time of the not yet, we live forward because of our faith and hope of resurrection as well. Additionally, we are given three gifts of the Spirit as we stay grounded in the foundation of Christian living: Faith, Hope and Love (Corinthians 13). May those profound "three" companions undergird us.

Respond

Imagine Christ sitting near you as you pray. Allow yourself to confide three things in your heart and mind during this Lent season.

Rest

Continue intentionally and prayerfully staying with the invitation to imagine Christ sitting near you. Next, whisper: "Thank you for faith, hope and love".

About the Author

Beth Knight is an ordained pastoral counselor and spiritual director. She also writes collects, Celtic caims, blessings and poetry. A former Alaskan, Beth now lives in Florida. When not serving in ministry, Beth loves spending time with three grandchildren, walking labyrinths, and is very involved with a global contemplative women's online community.



In Times of Distress

A Reflection for Thursday, April 10 by Eileen Lundy

Lectionary reading for 04/10/2025: [Psalm 31:9-16](#); [Isaiah 53:10-12](#); [Hebrews 2:1-9](#);

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 31:9-16

Read

Psalm 31:9-16 NIV

Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;

my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.

My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.

Because of all my enemies,
I am the utter contempt of my
neighbors
and an object of dread to my closest
friends—
those who see me on the street flee
from me.

I am forgotten as though I were dead;
I have become like broken pottery.

For I hear many whispering,
“Terror on every side!”
They conspire against me
and plot to take my life.

But I trust in you, LORD;
I say, “You are my God.”

My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my
enemies,
from those who pursue me.

Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love

Reflect

The Psalmist cries out asking for mercy because he is in distress. He very vividly describes what this distress feels like physically and emotionally as his enemies pursue him seeking to kill him. He also, though, makes a choice to trust God in this place of distress. This is a choice to trust the one who is in control, who holds our times in his hands. A choice to trust the one who knows our beginning and end.

In his distress the Psalmist cries out for deliverance from his enemies and also entrusts himself to God. The Psalmist asks to be saved in God’s unfailing love. The Hebrew word translated as unfailing love in this passage is *Hesed*. *Hesed* refers to God’s covenantal love to His people. It is a word that is hard to describe because *Hesed* has a depth that goes beyond our English word love. *Hesed*, God’s love, is a steadfast, promise keeping, unchanging, never ending,

trustworthy love that is merciful and full of lovingkindness. This is the love the Psalmist cries out for and the love we are invited to turn to during times of distress.

Today you may find yourself in a place of distress, experiencing a mixture of anxiety, fear, sorrow or pain. Perhaps like the Psalmist you feel pursued by an enemy. These enemies can take many different forms. You might have someone in your life who is seeking to harm or has harmed you physically or emotionally. Perhaps someone has betrayed, slandered or taken advantage of you. Or the enemy might be someone who holds different views, beliefs or values than you.

Your enemy, though, might also be difficult or painful circumstances. Circumstances that may be out of your control. This enemy may be something that has been present for a long time or something that has just happened. I recently received a medical diagnosis for which there are treatments that will slow the disease process, but it has no cure. It is an enemy I will fight, a battle I will not win but will end in a deliverance into glory. I find guidance in the psalmist's words "but I trust in you O Lord, my times are in your hands". In these words there is an invitation to trust in the one who turns His face toward me, sees me and loves me with an unfailing, steadfast love. I invite you from your own place of distress to join me in looking to Jesus, the one who is the light shining into darkness and rest in His unfailing, never-ending steadfast love.

Respond

Take a moment to consider a place of distress for you today. Is there a difficult situation you are in? Is there something or someone you are worried about? A challenge you are facing? A fear you are battling? A loss you have experienced?

If the weather is warm today where you live and the sun is shining, go outside and sit in the sun. If possible find something sturdy or solid to sit on such as a large rock, retaining wall or cement steps. If it is too cold outside or the sun is not shining, sit inside on a sturdy chair near a lamp or light source.

As you sit in your chosen place, feel the firm sturdiness of what is supporting your body. Turn your face toward the light and feel the warmth or brightness of the light source. Imagine God's face shining on you. From this place pray the Psalmist's words "I trust in you O Lord, my times are your hands" and then rest in God's steadfast love for you.

Rest

Beloved of God, I pray that today in your distress you would experientially know the steadfast, unchanging, never ending love of God that surpasses understanding. May you turn your eyes upon Jesus and be filled by the Holy Spirit with a peace that passes understanding. Amen.

About the Author

Eileen Lundy lives in Omaha, Nebraska. She is a bi-vocational pastor, a spiritual director and a recently retired nurse. Eileen is married to Steve, her best friend, and they have 3 adult children. She loves a good story in any form, written, film or spoken.



Suffering and the Human Experience

A Reflection for Friday, April 11 by Rev. Julia Styles

Lectionary reading for 4/11/2025: [Psalm 31:9-16](#); [Isaiah 54:9-10](#); [Hebrews 2:10-18](#)

Selected Passage: Hebrews 2:14-18

Read

Hebrews 2:14-18 *New Living Translation*

14 Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

16 We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. 17 Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. **18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.**

Reflect

When we experience suffering, we can often feel isolated or judged, assuming no one would understand what we are going through. We might even belittle our own suffering, comparing our plight to someone that seems to be worse off, saying “this problem seems small in comparison with those that are starving or enduring war.” As a result, we might avoid turning to God with our hurt and anxiety, assuming God only desires our thanks and praise. It is ironic that suffering causes us to isolate and turn inwards, when the fact is that suffering is a part of the human experience, and no matter how much we try to avoid or mask suffering, it will eventually come our way.

In Hebrews 2:10-18, we see that God desired to be in relationship with us so much that God sent God's self in the form of Jesus, experiencing the suffering and vulnerability that we experience here on earth. While Jesus was on earth he experienced the plight of a refugee when his family fled for Egypt, the vulnerability of being a child, temptation, hunger and thirst in the desert, humiliation and judgement from his own people, betrayal by his friends and followers, judgement from the religious elites, persecution from the government, anger at injustice and wrongdoing, misunderstanding from friends and foes alike, despair over the plight of Israel, and finally torture, capital punishment and death on the cross.

God has always been available to hear our cries of lament; today's lectionary reading of Psalm 39:1-8 is an example of an honest lament to God. But there is something comforting about knowing that Jesus has experienced many of the same emotions, temptations and suffering as us. When we are met with empathy, compassion and patience rather than judgment and condemnation, we start to heal and not feel so alone. With Jesus in mind, we can approach God without shame, knowing He understands our trials and tribulations. God has compassion for the human experience and wants us to come to God not just with awe, joy and gratitude but also with our grief, sadness, anger, pain, vulnerability and disappointment.

Through Jesus's death and resurrection, we also have a promise that the challenges, pains and lows we face do not define us, nor do they determine our future. Because Jesus defeated death, death, disease, injustice and evil no longer have the final word.

No matter what you are going through, God is with you (Immanuel-God with Us)

No matter where you feel defeated, God will Save you, (Jesus/Yeshua-God Saves)

Respond

There is a simple body prayer I teach in Spiritual Direction. Perhaps you would like to try it now:

Start by holding your hands in front of you, fists clenched.

Imagine your fear, pain and sorrow are held in your fists.

Release those worries, fears and sorrow by opening your fists and turning your hands palms-down.

Imagine your pain is now in the hands of God.

Finally turn your hands palms-up and imagine God filling them with God's love and compassion until they overflow.

Place your hands on your heart in gratitude to conclude the prayer.

Rest

We are grateful that God made Jesus in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested. May we lean on Jesus in times of suffering and put our hope in his saving grace. Amen.



About the Author

Julia Styles is a writer, spiritual director, and mother living in Atlanta, GA. She is passionate about women empowerment and helping people connect with God in their everyday lives. Writing and editing *Prayerful Reflections* is a spiritual practice that continues to re-connect her with God, creativity, and the greater Christian community. As a spiritual director, she meets with people online one-on-one for prayer, discernment, lament and encouragement. If you want a safe and sacred space to reflect on how God is at work in your life, sign up for a free spiritual direction session [here](#).

Betrayal By Any Other Name

A Reflection for Saturday, April 12 by Rev. Bronwyn Leigh Murphy

Lectionary reading for 4/12/2025: [Psalm 31:9-16; Leviticus 23:1-8; Luke 22:1-13](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Luke 22:1-13

Read

Luke 22:1-13 (NLT)

¹Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, ²and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. ³Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. ⁵They were delighted and agreed to give him money. ⁶He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. ⁷Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." ⁹"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. ¹⁰He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹²He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there." ¹³They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

Reflect

When my son was born, we unknowingly named him one of the top baby names of that year. I won't share my son's name here, but I'll give a hint that his name is *not* Judas. In fact, the name Judas has not appeared on any list of top 10 baby names in...probably ever. According to some estimates, currently [fewer than 200 males](#) in the United States have been given this first name at birth. The most popular Judas in modern history is decidedly the band Judas Priest, whose name is a whole other can of worms to unpack. The reason why elementary schools and high school football teams and corporate board rooms are not full of Judases? *Judas* is synonymous with ultimate betrayal. While Peter and John were faithfully preparing the sacred Passover meal, Judas was busy selling Jesus to the Messiah's adversaries. By this point in the life and ministry of Jesus, He had amassed naysayers and detractors who possessed some significant social and political power. Many had tried to take out Jesus, but had been unsuccessful. Then it became an inside job. No longer was the threat pressing in from the outside, but it was coming from within. Instead of being faithful to Christ, Judas sold his soul for temporary gain. One who had witnessed over and over the miracles and teachings of Jesus and was empowered to carry out the mission of God and impact the world in the name of the Savior...didn't. In the life and

ministry of the disciples, Peter stumbled, but was later redeemed, and John was the “disciple whom Jesus loved”. While the One Who Would be Redeemed and the One Whom Jesus Loved faithfully made preparations for the Passover meal, and the One Who Would Betray Jesus turned from all he knew of the Master to plot His demise. In plotting the Master’s demise, Judas unknowingly plotted his own. Instead of being inducted into the hall of heroes of the faith, 2000 years after his ultimate betrayal, Judas remains the man no one wishes to become. When we are faced with the proposition of temporary gain at the price of betrayal, let us remember why labor and delivery rooms across the nation are largely void of baby Judases. Though there may be some instant satisfaction and personal gain in betrayal, as we have learned from the stories of Peter, John, and Judas, silver loses its luster, but faithfulness to the Master shines bright.

Respond

Though you may not be selling out Jesus in the exact same way Judas did, in what ways might you be compromising your convictions for the promise of personal gain? What might you stand to lose? Where do you see evidence of God’s grace in your journey? How might you respond to His grace?

Rest

God, thank you that you are worthy of following. Thank you that you are Messiah, Savior, and Redeemer. As we are faced with temptation, give us strength to resist. As we are faced with opposition, give us grace and mercy to endure. Thank you that amidst human betrayal and selfishness you remain an unshakable, immovable, and consistent God. Amen.

About the Author



Bronwyn is an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church currently serving as a Chaplain Resident and Preschool Teacher in California, as well as serving churches as a guest preacher and conference speaker. Her favorite beverage is a venti water with ice from Starbucks.

Our Cornerstone

A Reflection for Palm Sunday, April 13 by Melanie Marie Myatt

Lectionary reading for 04/13/2025: [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](#); [Luke 19:28-40](#)

Selected passage for reflection: [Psalm 118.1-2, 19-29 NRSV](#)

Read

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 NRSV

The passover praise psalm

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you.

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Reflect

When we read the Psalm, we read a celebration of God's faithfulness and steadfast love. His love endures forever! Let's say it again: his love endures forever! God makes a gate for the righteous! The LORD has made this day and so we rejoice! God is good, and we give God thanks!

Right in the middle of this passage however, is the warning that God's people are not going to be faithful. The love of the people is not steadfast and will not endure forever. The stone will be rejected. The crowds cheering for Jesus as he enters Jerusalem will turn around and ask Pilate to crucify him. We are not steadfast. Our love does not endure.

In [Daniel 2](#), God promised that a time would come for the Roman empire to be brought down and for God's kingdom to be established on earth. The symbol for this event was a rock that

was not cut by human hands, a rock that would destroy the earthly empire and turn it into rubble. The people weren't just tired of being ruled by tyrannical emperors who thought they were gods, they were horrified by the atrocities perpetrated by their leaders. They were ready for God to come, smash the oppressors, and establish God's kingdom.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, it seemed like that moment had come. The "rock" had arrived. When the people didn't see their expectations fulfilled, they rejected God's rock and asked for him to be crucified. Their love did not endure. The people were not steadfast.

We may not see God doing everything we would like God to do in our country and in our world. We may even be horrified by the atrocities perpetrated by our leaders. But we continue to trust that God is steadfast. We trust that God's love endures forever.

And now that we see the fullness of God's plan, and we understand that Jesus is indeed our cornerstone, God asks us to be steadfast. God asks that our love, for God and for each other, would endure.

Respond

Wherever you are right now, take a few moments to settle yourself into your space. Close your eyes and take some deep, cleansing breaths. As you breathe in, say to yourself, "Give thanks to the LORD." As you breathe out, say, "God's love endures forever." Repeat this 5 times. Listen quietly for God's image or words in response to you.

Rest

Glorious and loving God, like Israel, we struggle to remain faithful, steadfast, and loving when we don't see you act or rescue in the way we hope and long to see you act. Over and over, you remind us that you are a good and loving God, even when we can't see it. As we watch and wait, give us glimpses of your glory and majesty, just like the people witnessed as Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Strengthen our "weak knees" and our faint hearts so that our love can endure, and we will remain steadfast in our faith.



About the Author

Melanie Myatt currently works as a chaplain at a retirement community in Glenview, Illinois and as program assistant for the C. John Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction. She is also a spiritual director, writer, mom of four, and master of the 15-minute nap. If you like her writing, you can also find her on [Substack](#).

Death Smells

A Reflection for Holy Monday, April 14 by Rev. Jo Anne Taylor

Lectionary readings for Monday of Holy Week: [Isaiah 42:1-9](#); [Psalm 36:5-11](#); [Hebrews 9:11-15](#); [John 12:1-11](#)

Selected passage for reflection: John 12:1-11

Read

John 12:1-11 *Common English Bible (CEB)*

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was among those who joined him at the table. Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound, of very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume.

Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), complained, "This perfume was worth a year's wages! Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would take what was in it.)

Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone. This perfume was to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it. You will always have the poor among you, but you won't always have me."

Many Jews learned that he was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. The chief priests decided that they would kill Lazarus too. It was because of Lazarus that many of the Jews had deserted them and come to believe in Jesus.

Reflect

This was *supposed* to be a funeral dinner. Martha had planned and prepared a funeral dinner. She'd been working on it for days, but Jesus had changed all those plans when he'd shown up at Lazarus' tomb. Now, instead of sharing fond memories of the deceased, the friends who gathered around this table were talking and laughing *with* him. Lazarus had become an overnight celebrity: The One Who Was No Longer Dead. Joy and wonder bubbled throughout the room, and the atmosphere had changed from gloom and sorrow to outright euphoria.

John carefully connects the story of Lazarus with the story of his sister Mary, not only by telling these tales back-to-back, but also by cross-referencing them to one another (See John 11:1-2). John draws a strong connection between the stench of Lazarus' tomb and the aroma of Mary's

perfume. Both Mary's anointing with nard and Lazarus' resurrection will draw our attention toward another death that looms on the horizon. We are entering Holy Week, and Good Friday will come all too soon.

Whenever we find paradox in scripture we need to pay attention, because paradox can stretch our assumptions, our biases, and our growing understanding of our place in God's kingdom. The smell of death offers us a paradox: the stench of rotting flesh and the fragrance of nard both remind us that we are dust, yet our hope is in resurrection.

The sense of smell powerfully connects our memories and emotions to our behaviors and beliefs. Certain smells warn us away from danger while others remind us of comfort and safety. The aroma of Mary's nard aroused a variety of responses – from worship to Judas' complaint, "Why was this perfume not sold ... and the money given to the poor?" When Jesus says, "Leave her alone ..." we are reminded that Christ welcomes every gift we offer in humility and devotion.

The threat of death may hover in the air along with the strong scent of nard, but Death does not get to sit at this table. Lazarus offers visible proof that Death has no power over Jesus, and even if those enjoying Martha's fine cooking don't fully comprehend it yet, we know that Jesus will completely defeat death before John's story is finished.

Respond

The sense of smell is often associated with prayer, most notably when incense is offered. The liturgy for Vespers (Evening Prayer) calls out, "Let my prayer rise before you as incense; the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (Psalm 141:2) Paul writes, "For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life ... in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God." (2 Corinthians 2:15-17 NIV) During Holy Week, you might want to light some incense or a scented candle while you pray a prayer of examen, as taught by St Ignatius. Here is a suggested outline for such a prayer:

Prayer of Examen

1. Become aware of God's presence. Breathe deeply.
2. Review the day with gratitude. It might be helpful to imagine the Holy Spirit walking with you through the events of the day, shining a candle into the shadows of your soul. Ask to see where you pleased God during the day, and where you didn't.
3. Pay attention to your emotions. What is God saying to you through your feelings?
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important, and pray from it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.
5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's ahead. Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask for help and understanding. Pray for hope.
6. End the Daily Examen with the Lord's Prayer.

Rest

Holy One, as we prepare to experience Holy Week with all our senses, may our lives be a pleasing aroma that draws others to you. May the God who created us, the Christ who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit who walks beside us give us peace. Amen.

About the Author



Rev. Jo Anne Taylor is a retired pastor living in Minnesota. Ordained to Word and Sacrament in the Evangelical Covenant Church, she has pastored three United Methodist congregations. Her training in intentional interim/transitional ministry has helped churches suffering from deep trauma or conflict. She writes at <https://pastorsings.com>.

Trusting in God

A Reflection for Holy Tuesday, April 15 by Sandra Zamble´

Lectionary reading for 4/15/20225: [Isaiah 49:1-7, Psalm 71:1-14 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, John 12:20-36](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Psalm 71:1-14 (NIV)

Read

[Psalm 71:1-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Read 3 times. What do you notice? What words stand out to you? What resonates with your soul as we acknowledge our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and His death and resurrection?

1 In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
2 In your righteousness, rescue me and
deliver me;
turn your ear to me and save me.
3 Be my rock of refuge,
to which I can always go;
give the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
4 Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the
wicked,
from the grasp of those who are evil and
cruel.
5 For you have been my hope,
Sovereign LORD,
my confidence since my youth.
6 From birth I have relied on you;
you brought me forth from my mother's
womb.
I will ever praise you.
7 I have become a sign to many; you are

my strong refuge.
8 My mouth is filled with your praise,
declaring your splendor all day long
.9 Do not cast me away when I am old;
do not forsake me when my strength is
gone.
10 For my enemies speak against me;
those who wait to kill me conspire
together.
11 They say, "God has forsaken him;
pursue him and seize him,
for no one will rescue him."
12 Do not be far from me, my God;
come quickly, God, to help me.
13 May my accusers perish in shame;
may those who want to harm me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.
14 As for me, I will always have hope;
I will praise you more and more.

Reflect

As an elementary teacher, I am always struck by the poignant and passionate emotions on the first day of school. The day is charged with excitement, wonder, joy, pride, and confidence. However, for some, when the teacher arrives and goodbyes must be said, the emotions are fear, dread, anxiety, and pain at the separation of the loving arms of a parent into the unfamiliar,

structured care of a stranger. For some children and parents, tears are shed at the impending separation. Younger preschool siblings join in the passionate outbursts as they witness their “best friends” leaving them, and they cannot accompany them. “What is the meaning of this?” their outbursts seem to convey. “Why is Big Brother or Big Sister leaving me?” One witnesses the confusion on the faces of some of the kindergarteners and the doubt that leaving one’s comfort zone is really a good idea after all. But, after the tearful goodbyes are made, and the separation has been accomplished, painful as it may be at the moment, the **joyful relief at seeing** parents at the end of the day, over time grows into a lasting love and appreciation of the teacher who the students come to love and trust and thus understand that their parent is still there, even when they leave to go to another strange place. They know that they have a place of safety.

In this passage, the psalmist begins with praise and acknowledgment of the Lord being his/her foundation—the one upon whom they place their trust. The psalmist reflects upon the dependability and faithfulness of God—a “strong refuge, to which I may resort continually...for you are my rock and my fortress.” The psalmist calls to mind that God has been there from the beginning, “You are my trust from my youth.” (Psalm 71:17b) But with that confidence from the past the psalmist makes an interesting plea: “Do not cast me off in the time of old age: Do not forsake me when my strength fails.”

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of this psalm is solid faith. And, along with a hearty, faith-filled statement of trust, as we go further along in this prayer, there is room to express a heartfelt plea and desire: Please, Lord, don’t forget about me when I am old, or perhaps, weak, or fallen mentally, physically, emotionally; when my faith fails, or when I am doubtful, or when I am vulnerable.” O God, do not be far from me, make haste to help me!” (vs. 12)

What a freedom to pray exactly how we feel when we feel it. Like Jesus, when upon the cross, cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” we, too, can cry out, Lord, I trust you, but please don’t leave me, when I am hurting or rejected by others. And, in that place of vulnerability and safety, we can remember the God of our salvation and conclude, that despite the painful degradations and separations of life, we can still say, “But I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more.”(v.14)

Respond

As you reread this passage, open your heart to what longings, fears, desires, that you have. Let them come forth and in safety, and trust, utter them aloud, and/or in a journal. Write out a line or two: Lord, I trust you or I desire to trust you. Help me when I am feeling_____.”

Rest

Lord, I come to you now, in full honesty of where I am with you. I know you have been faithful in many areas of my life. But, I ask you to help me to trust you. Help me to lie down in “green

pastures,” in the safety and knowledge of your comforting Presence, Love, and Compassion. I praise you for what you have done and for what you will continue to do in me. Help me to lean upon you. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief—and draw me to rest in you. In Christ’s Name. Amen.

About the Author



Sandra Zamble is a certified Spiritual Director. Sandra works full-time as an elementary ESL Resource teacher. Sandra serves in her church as an intercessor and lay soul-care provider. Sandra is the wife of an elder and has three young adult children. Sandra loves creative outlets such as singing, drama, and poetry. She is passionate about God’s justice and compassion and is humbled and joyful about holding space for those seeking to enter into spiritual conversations of that nature and listening with them, for the ever-present movement of God.

Keeping Our Focus on Jesus

A Reflection for Holy Wednesday, April 16 by Rev. leisha Hawley

Lectionary reading for 4/16/20225: [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#); [Psalm 70](#); [Hebrews 12:1-3](#); [John 13:21-32](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Hebrews 12:1-3

Read

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Reflect

As we journey through Lent, a season of reflection and preparation, Hebrews 12:1-3 offers us profound guidance. The passage encourages us to lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely, and to run with endurance the race set before us. This race is not a sprint but a marathon, requiring perseverance and focus.

The key to running this race successfully is to fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Jesus endured the cross, despising its shame, for the joy set before Him. His example teaches us that enduring hardship and opposition is part of our spiritual journey. By focusing on Jesus, we find the strength to persevere and not grow weary or lose heart.

During Lent, let us take time to reflect on the sacrifices Jesus made for us. Let us consider the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, and draw inspiration from their faith and endurance. As we face our own challenges and temptations, may we remember to look to Jesus, who empowers us to overcome.

Rest

Lord Jesus, as we journey through this season of Lent, help us to fix our eyes on You. Give us the strength to lay aside every weight and sin that hinders us. May we run with perseverance the race marked out for us, drawing inspiration from Your example. Help us to endure hardships with faith, knowing that You are with us every step of the way. Amen.

About the Author



Rev. Leisha Hawley is the Director of Evangelism for the Evangelical Covenant Church. Leisha's extensive career in ministry and experience serving as pastor, prison chaplain, and coach has prepared her to work with regional conferences and local congregations throughout the Covenant.

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A Holy Roar

A Reflection for Maundy Thursday April 17 By Kim Delp

Lectionary Reading for 04/17/2025 [Exodus 12:1-4, \(5-10\), 11-14](#) [Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19](#) [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#) [John 13:1-17, 31b-35](#)

Selected Passage: John 13:1-17, 31b-35, *New Revised Standard Version*

Read

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

The service of Christ: foot washing and meal

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already decided[a] that Judas, son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet,[b] but is entirely clean. And you[c] are clean, though not all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers[d] greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

The New Commandment

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32 If God has been glorified in him,[a] God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33 Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also

should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Reflect

I didn't grow up in a church culture that celebrated some of the high church traditions, at least that I remember. We of course celebrated Easter, but it wasn't until we started attending a church where creeds and prayers were recited, the Doxology was sung, communion was once a month, and we had services for days like Maundy Thursday that I realized there were different moments in every church that are captured, and holy space is created. Maundy Thursday specifically became a tradition with our pastor and family friends to celebrate in community this holiest of days. It was experienced in community, breaking bread together, talking about life together around the fireplace. It was bigger of course than the living room where we were, but we experienced this day in a way like what the disciples did, communing and experiencing life together.

This day reflects the whole week we are engaged in. “Holy Week.” We enter this day knowing as Jesus did, what was coming. Knowing what had been, what was currently happening and what was to come. Yet, we still enter. We enter this holiest of spaces with reverence, this holy moment of humility that Jesus shows his disciples and in turn, us. He presents the truest and purest form of humility. This holiest of moments was written down, but the weight of the words and the actions captured are sometimes overshadowed by the political circumstances, those around the table, what was coming and even distracted by Peter wanting a bath!

The “mandate” or command which is where Maundy Thursday comes from (Latin of *Mandatum* or command) brings to light the new commandment that Jesus gives us. The whole moment screams, even *roars* humility and Jesus tops the whole display of humility by washing His disciples feet, telling them to do the same to others and then tells them to love. To love like He loved them.

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

I wonder if there was a flashback moment for all of them where they thought of how he loved them? I wonder if at that moment it clicked for them as they remembered what He had just done by washing their feet? I wonder if moments they had all witnessed, calling the children to come to Him, Lazarus raised from the dead, Jesus calming the storm flashed in their brains to understand the significant “new command” He was giving them? Do we remember the significance of this command in our own lives? This command isn't optional. This command isn't something we can choose when it fits our ideal or when it is wrapped up nicely. The command is to love as He did. To love those that question, to love those who hate, to love those who don't deserve it, to love those who sin against us. That is the command, the holy roar of humility.

There is no better time than what we are living where love is more necessary and where it is more difficult.

Friends, the command is simple, yet so hard, but we have an example in Jesus of how to do it.

He knew His divinity in where He came from, the death coming, the victory over it and the return to the calm and stability of His Father, and yet He still chose to kneel before dusty, messy people to show them the most excellent way to love, humility.

May we all out of reverence for what Jesus did for us continue to kneel in humility to all those around us to bear witness to the action of the cross coming tomorrow.

Respond

I would like to encourage you to set aside a few minutes here to engage in taking this mandate or command a step further. This passage is radical and we all know that at this point in history, a radical response of love is what is most needed and is probably most difficult to do. I ask you to take some time, get quiet, put your phone away, and just sit in the presence of Jesus. Put aside your ideas of what radical love looks like and truly ask Jesus what that looks like from Him. Seek Him in how *He* would have you respond in true humility to show love to those around you. Know that if you are truly seeking and asking, He will answer but be prepared that radical is not weak and it will likely come at a cost to you, but the radical love of Jesus is worth every earthly cost knowing that we are acting in obedience to the love He commands.

Rest

Eternal God, in the sharing of a meal your son established a new covenant for all people, and in the washing of feet he showed us the dignity of service.

Grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit these signs of our life in faith

may speak again to our hearts, feed our spirits, and refresh our bodies. Amen. *(Reproduced from*

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About the Author



Kim Delp has been serving as a missionary in Ecuador for the last 14 years with The Evangelical Covenant Church. She is a wife to Joel, an ordained Covenant Pastor, and mom to Simeon (15), Esther (10) and Ephraim (9). She co-founded the Santiago Partnership with her husband to partner in Ecuador through medical clinics to serve the medically underserved, a Home for At-Risk Children, and more. <https://www.santiagopartnership.org/> She is also a Nurse Practitioner. She loves authentic connections, especially over coffee or a homemade meal, music, and reading.

The Nature of Power

A Reflection for Good Friday, April 18 by Rev. Dr. Laura Truax

Lectionary reading for 4/18/2025: [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#); [Psalm 22](#); [Hebrews 10:16-25](#); [5:7-9](#); [John 18:1-19:42](#)

Selected passage for reflection: John 19:10 - 11

Read

John 19:10 - 11

⁹ Pilate went back inside the palace. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.

Reflect

The past few months have been tough. Everywhere, bullies seem to be winning. Dominating the world stage and, if I’m honest, captivating some of my best energy. Likely this is why I approached this account of Jesus’ execution through the lens of power: Who *thinks* they have it? Who actually has it? How do they use it and when?

Like ocean currents crashing to shore then pulling back out, John moves the narrative energy from Judas to Caiaphas; Caiaphas to Pilate; Pilate to crowd; crowd to Pilate. Where power seemingly remains. A gurgle from the Sanheidren who quibble with the nomenclature on the cross, but quickly the final declaration from Pilate.

Nowhere do we see Jesus control the situation. At no point does Jesus demand, compel or force his will on anyone...other than himself. Certainly Pilate is aware of who is holding the power - he names it directly in 19:1, exhibiting surprise at what he presumes is Jesus’ passivity Pilate asks, “*Do you not know that I have the power to release and power to kill?*”

In other words: What’s wrong with you? Why aren’t you groveling or begging? Do you not understand that I’m in charge of everything that happens next?

Pilate. Singular and Supreme. The titular head of a political and military system controlled by him. We note that John’s narrative has no hand-washing of guilt, or second-guessing of a wife’s dream. John has left the belly aching to his friend Matthew. John’s Pilate is the cold, intellectual head of the Roman state without remorse. A moment of fear from a mob storming the gate, but nothing more. This Pilate is seemingly all powerful.

If not for the calm self-possession of Jesus. Jesus whose demeanor stops Pilate cold. The only piece that throws Pilate off the mark is the disposition of the whipped prisoner, Jesus. While Jesus doesn't exert power over anyone else, his power over himself is magnetic. It's a power of being fully present — to all of it. Jesus doesn't retreat into religiosity that might disconnect him from the horror. He is in touch with his mind (his discourse on truth 18:37) body ("I thirst" in 19:27) and spirit (inviting new relationships in 19:26-27 and knowing when his work is complete in 19:30).

Jesus' power isn't conferred from outside, it comes from within. A certainty of his divine purpose; a confidence that nothing happens outside of God presence and a clarity that everything happening would be in the eventual service of God's liberating Love, foreshadowing Paul's realization that

"God causes all things to work together for good."

We throw words like "miracle" around, and in just two days we will proclaim the Miracle of the Resurrection. But to me the miracle is the tenacious grip Jesus has on faith in divine power. Faith to believe his life was not a failure. That while he had spoken to thousands, these final hours of life had no more than a handful. Faith to believe that he didn't need to see the other side of death, to believe that God would accompany him there. Faith to know that while his particular work was completed, God's work on earth would continue.

Faith to believe that the greatest power was not coercion but love. That Love would be the answer to the smug arrogance of Pilate. Love would be the antigen to the mob of the misled. Love would be the only force that would heal the world.

Respond

The dramatic contrast of this text asks us what kind of power we are exercising. Jesus was always quick to stand up and speak up. But he did so from a consolidated place of peaceful conviction. Spend some time imagining Jesus and then reviewing your own responses and actions.

Rest

Jesus, you are in control of the world. May your power be my motivation and your example my desire. May you continue to move my feet and keep my heart.

About the Author

Laura Truax is a minister, author, and teacher with a current focus on meditation and contemplative listening. She leads a daily meditation group at MeditationChapel.org, and is active in teaching through [The Olive Tree Community](http://TheOliveTreeCommunity).



Holy Saturday

A Reflection for Holy Saturday, April 19 by Eileen Lundy

Lectionary reading for 4/19/2025: [Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24; Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16; 1 Peter 4:1-8; Matthew 27:57-66](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

Read

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24 NIV

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 I am the man who has seen affliction
by the rod of the Lord's wrath. | he shuts out my prayer. |
| 2 He has driven me away and made me
walk
in darkness rather than light; | 9 He has barred my way with blocks of
stone;
he has made my paths crooked. |
| 3 indeed, he has turned his hand against
me
again and again, all day long. | 19 I remember my affliction and my
wandering,
the bitterness and the gall. |
| 4 He has made my skin and my flesh grow
old
and has broken my bones. | 20 I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me. |
| 5 He has besieged me and surrounded me
with bitterness and hardship. | 21 Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope: |
| 6 He has made me dwell in darkness
like those long dead. | 22 Because of the Lord's great love we are
not consumed,
for his compassions never fail. |
| 7 He has walled me in so I cannot escape;
he has weighed me down with chains. | 23 They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. |
| 8 Even when I call out or cry for help, | 24 I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him." |

Reflect

The Old Testament book of Lamentations is a song of sorrow written by the prophet Jeremiah in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem. Here in Lamentations chapter 3 Jeremiah cries out in the very standard structure of lament found throughout Scripture. He begins his prayer with a brutally honest expression of where he currently is and what he is thinking and feeling in this space. Jeremiah, God's chosen servant, basically says, "God, here is where I am and it is your fault. All I hoped for is gone and when I cry out for help you don't respond" In his crying out

to God, Jeremiah doesn't ask why. Why, is the question that precipitates and lies beneath the surface of lament.

In his prayer of lament Jeremiah tells God honestly what he is thinking and feeling in the present moment. He remembers what has happened, the destruction, pain and bitterness of it all. But then, he also remembers or perhaps it is that he chooses to remember by "calling to mind" something else he also knows to be true. Jeremiah, remembers the Lord's steadfast, unchanging compassionate, covenant keeping love. Perhaps Jeremiah even remembers specific times in which he has encountered and experienced God's ever new mercies and faithfulness. In this remembering there is a turning which happens in prayers of lament. Jeremiah makes a shift and counsels himself to wait for the Lord. Jeremiah reminds himself that the Lord, who is his portion, is the one who supplies what is needed. Jeremiah chooses to trust and believe that God alone is enough. He chooses to wait on God and put his hope in God alone.

Holy Saturday is a place of waiting in the in between. Jesus' tortured, crucified body lies dead in a tomb barricaded by a stone. The disciples scatter, the one they pledged their lives to is dead and buried; what they had hoped for is gone. The one who they believed to be the promised Messiah, who taught them about life in God's kingdom, who would have been their king has been crucified on the cross and lies dead in a tomb. The day we now call holy was for the disciples a horrific Saturday where all hope seemed lost.

Perhaps today you find yourself in a place of hopelessness like the disciples or Jeremiah. Perhaps you are grieving a loss or are living with hard, painful circumstances. Or maybe you are in a time of transition from one thing or place to another and living with some uncertainty regarding your future. Into the seemingly hopelessness of your "Saturday" I invite you to allow Jeremiah to guide you with his yet. "Yet, even in this space, this place of pain, loss, disappointment, devastation and hopelessness; I will call this to mind and I have hope". What does Jeremiah call to mind? The steadfast love of God. Jeremiah chooses to rest in God's compassionate, unchanging, rock solid love. From this place he chooses to wait for the Lord. In this choice he encounters the One who is enough, his portion. In God's presence this *Saturday place* becomes holy.

Respond

Is there a "Holy Saturday" place in your life this year? What words do you need to hear today? Offer prayer of lament, an honest prayer telling God where you are, what you are thinking, what you are feeling , what you need to hear and what you want God to do. Then, sit in the silence and listen for God's word to you

Rest

My sisters, may we on this Holy Saturday, remember God's faithfulness to his promises in the past, trust in his steadfast love and encounter the one who is enough. In the Saturdays of life may we place our hope in the ultimate Sunday when all that is wrong will be made right when God's kingdom comes in its fullness.

About the Author



Eileen Lundy lives in Omaha, Nebraska. She is a bi-vocational pastor, a spiritual director and a recently retired nurse. Eileen is married to Steve, her best friend, and they have 3 adult children. She loves a good story in any form, written, film or spoken.

Rising From The Ashes

A Reflection for Easter Sunday, April 20 by Rev. Alicia Reese

Lectionary reading for 04/20/2025: [Easter Vigil](#)

Selected passage for reflection: **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

Read

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (NIV)

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³ He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”

⁴ Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! ⁵ This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

¹¹ Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴ I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.’”

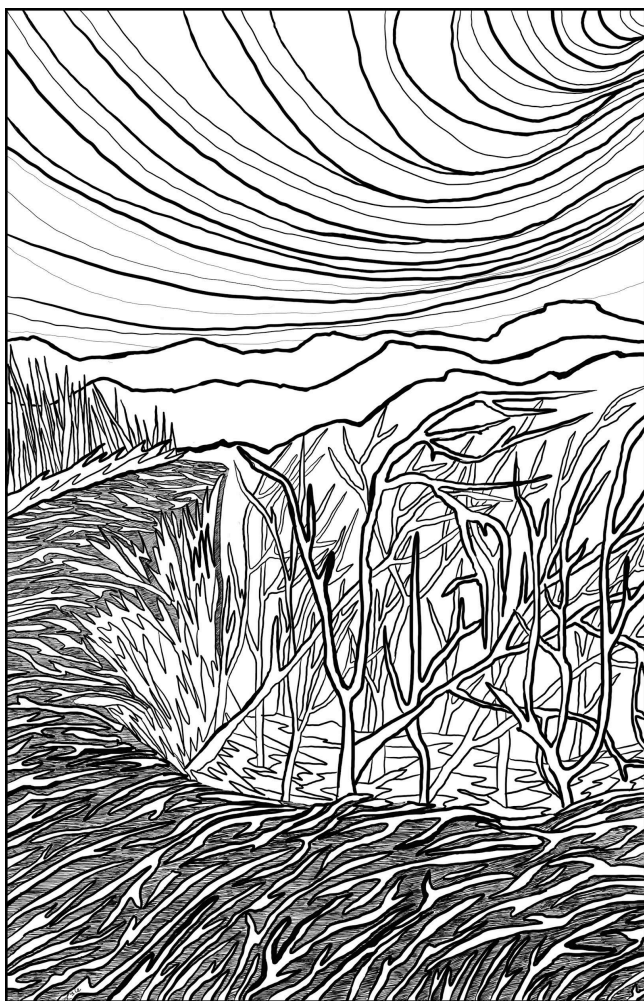
Reflect

At our church Easter Vigil is a big deal, in fact, it's the biggest deal of the year. This four-part service begins on Saturday evening outside around a fire where we move into a dark sanctuary. In the middle of the service, after the story of God and God's people have been told from

Genesis through Jesus, we move from Lent into Easter, throwing up the lights, parading in with Easter Lillies and singing *Christ the Lord Is Risen Today*. This enactment of moving from dark to light, death to resurrection is a powerful reminder of the hope we have in a God who resurrects. I see this same enactment in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones. I think of how certain flowers only bloom after wildfires, their seeds dormant for years until the heat of devastating wildfire releases them from death to life. Easter Vigil reminds us that death is not the end of the story. Barbara Brown Taylor, in her book *Learning To Walk In The Dark*, says that "new life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark." In the artwork below by Lisle Gwynn Garrity, I see both Ezekiel's image of dry bones and a place for new seeds to germinate after devastation. I invite you to look closer for what you see, using the following Visio Divina that I developed using an improv exercise called "5-4-3-2-1."

This is a Visio Divina that helps us ground ourselves in the moment and engage our bodies and senses. As you move through steps 1-5, take a few moments with each, leaning into each of the bodily senses it calls you to. Begin with a few deep, centering breaths.

1



1. As you look at the image, what are five things you see visually in the art? What is your eye drawn to?

2. As you look at the image, what are four things you feel? What feelings, emotionally or physically are noticeable?

3. As you look at the image, what are three things you hear in the art? That is, if this was a real, living scene that you were in, what might you hear around you?

4. As you look at the image, what are two things you can smell? That is, if this was a real, living scene that you were in, what might you smell?

5. As you look at the image, what is one thing you can taste? That is, if this was a real, living scene that you were in, what might you taste?

As you find yourself fully immersed in this scene, imagining yourself in it, I want you to take a few minutes to listen in this moment for what God could be saying to you through this piece of art. Does a feeling, word, Scripture, or idea come to mind? If so, jot it down.

¹ "Valley of Dry Bones by Lisle Gwynn Garrity"; image used with permission

Where in our life might we “practice resurrection” as Wendell Berry says? Whether it is imagining dry bones coming to life or experiencing the movements of Easter Vigil, what practices help us rise from the ashes and enact resurrection as a reminder that death and devastation, dry bones and dead hopes, are not the end of the story?

Respond

After completing the Visio Divina, print off the image and color it in, whatever that means for you. As you do so, ask God how in this transition from Lent to Easter, from death to resurrection, God might be birthing new hope in you. Where do you see new life in dry bones and devastation?

Rest

*God of Resurrection,
Whatever hopelessness we might be
feeling in body, mind, or spirit,
Lord, breathe your life-giving breath
on these dry bones.
May our hopes come together
again, stand up, and draw breath.
Amen.*

About the Author



Rev. Alicia Reese is the Senior Pastor at Resurrection Covenant Church in Chicago, IL. On the side, she moonlights as an improviser and teaches improv as spiritual formation (often inside prisons). She is a Doctorate of Ministry candidate at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, focusing on how improv can be a disrupter for hope in liminal spaces. She and her husband live with their two children and three dogs in Chicagoland.

