

# Lord, Where Do We Go?



Daily Devotional for Summer 2020

## Some Suggestions for Using this Devotional

### 1. Center Yourself

Sit, doing nothing, for a few moments to give your mind time to quiet down. If you have not already, perhaps designate a spot in your home to which you will return every day for your devotion.

### 2. Read the verse(s) and reflection

Take your time! If you find it helpful, find the passage in your Bible, read the verse and/or reflection several times through, read it once and come back to it a few minutes later, or explore it in a different way that works for you. Some days may stir up more thoughts and emotions than others – that is okay.

For the verses without their own reflections, spend some time in the story from which they were taken. What does that context bring up for you? What do you notice?

### 3. Talk to God

After you explore the reading, take time to pray, write your own reflection (the lines at the bottom of each page may not be enough – feel free to write more!), discuss it with loved ones, or remain in silent reflection with God. Allow the passage to work in your mind and heart!

# Monday, June 1

*Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life."*  
- John 6:68

Simon Peter's question comes on the heels of a rather curious situation quite early in Jesus' ministry: Jesus had been teaching a number of disciples about himself as the Bread of Heaven, and in the process greatly confused the vast majority of them. As a result, the text says that "Because of this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him."

Jesus then asks the remaining twelve disciples whether they are also thinking about abandoning him, and Simon Peter's response above is essentially his way of saying, "are you kidding? Who could possibly be better equipped to lead us?" Again, it is Simon Peter who recognizes Jesus as the messiah – and is not afraid to speak up – when it is most important.

In uncertain times, during a pandemic, after a job loss, in a medical or mental health crisis, etc., where do you turn? If you usually turn to God, that is absolutely fantastic! You are way ahead of me there... If you find yourself turning elsewhere when it comes down to the wire, though, welcome to the club! This devotional is meant to recognize that we are human and don't always do what we're supposed to, but that God still loves us. Knowing this, what are your hopes and expectations for this summer of faith renewal?

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# Week of June 2

Tuesday: God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.  
- Genesis 1:31

Wednesday: You, O Lord, will protect us; you will guard us from this generation forever.  
- Psalm 12:7

Thursday: God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.  
- Luke 1:53

Friday: And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.  
- John 1:14

Saturday: And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized.  
- Acts 9:18

Sunday: Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.  
- Matthew 15:28

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# Monday, June 8

*When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.*  
- Matthew 28:17

“...but some doubted.” No matter which story of the Bible we read, this half sentence appears to be the common thread. It may not be explicitly mentioned, but usually there are at least a handful of people who find everything that is happening too good to be true. A relatively young man who claims to be the long-awaited messiah and is capable and strong with his words, but not with force? Who said he’d bring the kingdom of God, but dies the most shameful death imaginable? Who died and yet somehow... didn’t?

Of course, this is not exclusive to Jesus’ story – even in the Old Testament God repeatedly makes an example of those who question God (spoiler alert: it never ends well for the doubters...). And, we all know that our society is firmly based on doubt and reassurance, otherwise we would never achieve scientific advances.

So what do we make of the fact that God hasn’t eradicated the human proclivity for doubt? A healthy dose of doubt has, certainly, historically kept most of our ancestors alive until their appointed time: “I doubt this reckless thing is safe, so I’m not going to do it.” Faith, arguably, has both lower and higher stakes than concern for our immediate physical safety – so how do you feel doubt helping or challenging you in your faith?

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# Week of June 9

Tuesday: Then God said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

- Exodus 3:5

Wednesday: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

- Psalm 23:4

Thursday: Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

- John 3:17

Friday: (...) and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

- Luke 3:22

Saturday: For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

- Romans 6:14

Sunday: He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

- Mark 5:34

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## Monday, June 15

*So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"*  
- Genesis 18:12

Oh, Sarah... Abraham's wife has got to be one of the most complicated characters in the Bible, and that is saying something (since most of the people in the Bible are flawed, broken human beings that only make it by the grace and love of God). She unwaveringly supports her husband but harshly mistreats her servants, and she sometimes has a hard time trusting God – as in this situation.

Angels of God had come to visit Abraham and Sarah and told them that they would still become parents after all, and Sarah chuckles to herself and shakes her head: "yeah, right." She has resigned herself to the role of childless wife of a prophet, and maybe we can even sense some bitterness in her words. The angels, of course, notice how Sarah reacts, and we know the rest of the story very well.

As with so many of the other stories that we will find in this booklet, it is noteworthy though that even though Sarah shakes her head in disbelief, God doesn't leave her. God keeps his promise to her, and she eventually gives birth to Isaac. Many families who struggle with infertility can no doubt relate to Sarah in this case, but even beyond that specific situation, have you found yourself doubting like Sarah? What happened?

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## Week of June 16

Tuesday: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: I am the Lord your God.  
- Leviticus 18:2

Wednesday: I sought the Lord, and God answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.  
- Psalm 34:4

Thursday: Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham."  
- Luke 19:9

Friday: And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."  
- Matthew 14:33

Saturday: Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy.  
- 1 Corinthians 14:1

Sunday: When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep."  
- Luke 7:13

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## Monday, June 22

*Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.*

- Genesis 21:16

The story of Hagar and her son Ishmael, in many ways, is often heartbreaking. A slave to Abraham's wife, Hagar did not have a choice when her mistress Sarah commanded that she should be a substitute mother for the barren elderly woman (in today's understanding that means that Hagar was raped by Abraham). And of course after Sarah did finally have Isaac, she forced Abraham to throw Hagar and Ishmael out of the camp.

This is where we meet Hagar. She has just run out of water for her adolescent son, and is grieving his impending death of thirst. As any loving parent would, she finds the only shady spot far and wide where she tries to make her son comfortable, and then she leaves so he doesn't have to see her anguish.

We know the ending to the story, of course: an angel of God intervenes and shows her a fresh spring of water, Ishmael grows up to be strong and skillful, and his descendants become a numerous people. But in that moment, Hagar is overcome with emotion. She is exhausted, she feels empty. We may not find ourselves in a literal desert, but what exhausts you? Do you allow other people – your friends and family – to notice? How does God factor into these situations for you?

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## Week of June 23

Tuesday: I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.

- Numbers 11:17

Wednesday: Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.

- Psalm 46:10

Thursday: And even the hairs on your head are all counted.

- Matthew 10:30

Friday: "I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- Mark 1:8

Saturday: (...) for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

- Galatians 3:26

Sunday: Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of that woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."

- John 4:39

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# Monday, June 29

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*  
- Psalm 13:1

The beginning of Psalm 13 is pure lament – asking God to listen and be present – but it goes even beyond that. The Psalm continues by demanding that God answer: “Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!” The psalmist doesn’t just want God to listen, they want God to acknowledge what is happening in the psalmist’s life, and to *answer* – to react. We are not often taught to speak to God that way, to yell at God to answer us like we might in a fight with a friend or family member.

But here we have a more than 2,000-year old example of such a conversation with God! What’s more, the end of the Psalm doesn’t complain about the negative consequences of speaking to God in such a “disrespectful” way. On the contrary, the last two verses are verses of praise: the psalmist sings to God, because God was good to them.

The main idea of this Psalm is that God can take our anger, our disappointment, and our demands for help. How might that change your relationship with God? In times as unstable as ours, what do you lament, what makes you angry with God? Have you expressed that anger? Why or why not?

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# Week of June 30

Tuesday: (...) yet the Lord set God’s heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today.  
- Deuteronomy 10:15

Wednesday: But I will sing of your might; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been a fortress for me and a refuge in the day of my distress.  
- Psalm 59:16

Thursday: He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”  
- Mark 8:29

Friday: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”  
- Luke 19:38

Saturday: I can do all things through God who strengthens me.  
- Philippians 4:13

Sunday: Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.  
- Matthew 28:9

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# Monday, July 6

*(...) they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"*  
- Luke 17:13

Ten lepers hear that Jesus is coming their way, and they approach him, calling only one short sentence: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" No long explanation of what they need or how they're still good people despite their illness and isolation or why they deserve God's love – nothing.

And Jesus responds in a similarly short fashion: "Go and show yourselves to the priests" (getting confirmation from the priests was the only way to prove that they were truly healed). God knows what these lepers have suffered even without them having to tell or explain, and Jesus sends them on their way healed without even having to pronounce the words like he usually does.

What is something that maybe you don't have the words to explain that you are carrying around with you at the moment and that is causing you pain? Have you tried to explain it to God in prayer? How did you feel – relieved, frustrated, inadequate,...? How would you feel if you knew that you didn't need eloquent sentences – only to call out, "Jesus, have mercy!"? Would you feel understood by God if that is all you asked? Why or why not?

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# Week of July 7

Tuesday: So Abraham called that place "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

- Genesis 22:14

Wednesday: Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to help me!

- Psalm 70:1

Thursday: Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

- Matthew 11:28

Friday: It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

- John 6:45

Saturday: But the Lord is faithful; God will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Sunday: Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.

- Mark 14:9

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# Monday, July 13

*Know, then, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to occupy because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people.*

- Deuteronomy 9:6

Admittedly, the image this verse conjures up makes me chuckle. It almost seems like God is the slightly annoyed, slightly amused parent of a stubborn toddler, somewhat unwillingly handing over Palestine to the Israelites who won't be content until they have it. Most of us know exactly what that picture would look like: a small human looking up at us, impatiently bouncing on both feet, stretching their arms out toward us and grasping air until their tiny fingers wrap around whatever it is they demanded.

But fascinatingly, God doesn't deny the Israelites what they want. Yes, God is often fed up with human beings, but nothing about this verse implies that God is refusing the Israelites the land God had promised them. Sure, there is the 40-year detour through the desert after they had already almost made it to the promised land, but still, God doesn't just send them back to slavery.

We call God "Father" and more recently sometimes "Mother," but how comfortable do we feel actually treating God like a parent? How comfortable do we feel asking God for what we need, even begging or throwing tantrums? Judging by this verse, God could handle it!

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# Week of July 14

Tuesday: But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground.

- Exodus 14:16

Wednesday: Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

- Psalm 80:19

Thursday: But not a hair on your head will perish.

- Luke 21:18

Friday: Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!"

- Mark 9:7

Saturday: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

- Hebrews 11:1

Sunday: And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

- Luke 7:50

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## Monday, July 20

*Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.*

- Matthew 13:30

How often do we find ourselves judging other people? Our first instinct is probably to say, “no, of course not! God clearly said not to, so I don’t!” But what about these microjudgments that we have been conditioned to make in split seconds when we pass someone at the store? The judgments that flash through our mind before we push them to the back because we know we’re not supposed to have these thoughts?

Of course, it is deeply engrained in human nature to judge – after all, sound judgment and quick assessment of situations and people was necessary to keep ourselves alive throughout history. Even more fascinating, then, to have this verse, isn’t it? God tells us that we don’t have to judge those around us – that is not a burden that we have to take on!

Instead, we can focus fully on our own growth and do everything we can to nourish those around us, without having to worry about who is “worthy” and who is not. We can relax in the knowledge that God, in their infinite grace and love, takes the burden of judging (and by extension, punishing) off our shoulders – instead, we’re allowed to love and nurture those around us. How might you live in that new freedom and energy?

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## Week of July 21

Tuesday: (...) As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

- Joshua 1:5

Wednesday: When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.

- Psalm 94:19

Thursday: When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

- Matthew 9:36

Friday: Then Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine but God’s who sent me.”

- John 7:16

Saturday: In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

- Ephesians 1:13

Sunday: Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

- Mark 16:9

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## Monday, July 27

*“(…) For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her.*

- Mark 14:5

So many of today’s conversations circle around the same old question: “But can we afford it?” Most of the time, this question of course refers to money, but sometimes we also ask in other contexts. Do we have the time? Do we have the energy? Will it make us look good to other people?

In the story from which today’s Bible verse is taken, a woman (in other Gospels identified as “Mary”) brings an expensive essential oil to anoint Jesus’ feet. We may not have an everyday frame of reference for the amount of money this oil cost, but one denarius was the average worker’s daily wage. So this was almost an entire year’s worth of wages that she spent on the anointing oil!

But Jesus defends her: her actions were important, because he will not be with his disciples much longer – she did not waste the oil. Have you been in a similar situation? Maybe you have this one set of fine china that is only meant for important occasions, or plans to do something good for a friend when the time is right? Or perhaps you want to be good to yourself, but only when you feel like you deserve it.

What if we were more courageous with how we give of ourselves, like this woman? What do you think would happen?

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## Week of July 28

Tuesday: Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, (…), and command the rock before their eyes to yield its water. Thus you shall bring water out of the rock for them; thus you shall provide drink for the congregation and their livestock.

- Numbers 20:8

Wednesday: Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good; for God’s steadfast love endures forever.

- Psalm 106:1

Thursday: Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

- John 6:35

Friday: Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength.

- Luke 22:43

Saturday: when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

- Colossians 2:12

Sunday: But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.

- Matthew 9:25

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## Monday, August 3

*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.*

- Job 38:4

This verse is fascinating in two main ways. It is God's response to Job's complaint about his situation after he not only lost everything he had and loved but also had to endure the... less than helpful advice of his friends, and in two short sentences, God both puts Job in his place and relieves him of his supposed duty to have everything figured out.

Of course, it is more obvious that these sentences were meant to put Job in his place. After all, tiny Job is less than the size of an ant when compared to the immense planet Earth that God built eons before Job was born. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Job knows the answer – aside from a future known in God's mind, Job wasn't anywhere on the radar during the creation story.

But at the same time, God also tells Job, "let me worry about everything." Job, of course, is in pain physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually – after all, he didn't do anything that would justify his terrible losses. God recognizes this situation and effectively reassures Job: "I know. You don't have the power to cause either the good or the bad happening in the world. Let me do my work." Have you felt like Job before? Did you hear God in a similar way?

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## Week of August 4

Tuesday: It is the Lord who goes before you. God will be with you; God will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

- Deuteronomy 31:8

Wednesday: Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

- Psalm 116:7

Thursday: Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

- Luke 12:32

Friday: He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."

- Mark 14:36

Saturday: (...) and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

- 1 Timothy 1:14

Sunday: When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

- John 11:33

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# Monday, August 10

*At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

- 1 Kings 19:9

Poor prophet Elijah, like most other prophets, had a really rough go at it. Persecuted by kings and leaders, continually having to subvert the established power system by anointing new kings, with a price on his head, ... Life was rough for him, and the situation where we meet him is no different: he went against the will of a king, had to flee, eventually left his servant in a safe place, and continued on for another 40 days until he came to this cave.

God lets him rest for a night, and then initiates the conversation: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah explains, God strengthens his resolve by showing God's presence to him, and Elijah receives his next assignment. That was probably not the course of action that Elijah had expected. Wouldn't he at least have wanted to rest a little longer? But God sends him out, and he goes.

Have you found yourself in such a situation – something went wrong, you took a step back to rest, but before you felt you were ready you felt this itch, you sensed this call, that it was your turn to get back into it? How did you react? If you followed the call, did you realize you did have the strength you needed? If you resisted, what happened and how did it feel?

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# Week of August 11

Tuesday: For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey.

- Exodus 40:38

Wednesday: When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

- Psalm 126:1

Thursday: Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart, get up, he is calling you."

- Mark 10:49

Friday: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

- John 14:3

Saturday: But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

- James 3:17

Sunday: When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

- Luke 13:12

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## Monday, August 17

*For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that God may be merciful to all.*  
- Romans 11:32

This verse probably sounds quite strange to 21<sup>st</sup> century ears. God has deliberately made us disobedient so that God can prove their mercy and love? What? Doesn't that go completely against our understanding of our relationship with God? And wouldn't that make God some kind of evil mastermind who knows exactly how to toy with us?

Commentaries don't really help us here (most simply avoid this particular verse), but perhaps, there is another possible interpretation. What if we thought about it this way: "For God has given all human beings free will and self-determination, so that God may be merciful to all."

Free will and self-determination, topics which have caused heated arguments for millennia, allow us to choose what we do in any given situation – good, bad, or grey. God loves us enough to trust us to make our own decisions (more or less well), and even when we entangle ourselves in hurtful actions and reactions, God is nothing but forgiving and merciful.

This interpretation is only one way to try and make sense of this confusing verse, but it is worth entertaining that notion even just for a few minutes. Under that interpretation, then, how might we approach our broken, hurting society anew? What should be our focus moving forward? Who should lead?

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## Week of August 18

Tuesday: Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. (...)  
- 1 Samuel 16:13

Wednesday: Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand and your right hand delivers me.  
- Psalm 138:7

Thursday: Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!"  
- Mark 9:24

Friday: Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.  
- Luke 23:46

Saturday: But do not ignore this fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.  
- 2 Peter 3:8

Sunday: Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).  
- John 20:16

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# Monday, August 24

*If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.*  
- Psalm 139:8

God is with us, no matter where we are, and to prove God's presence, perhaps no picture is more poignant than the one evoked by Psalm 139: Whether we are over the moon or in the pit of despair, whether we feel like we are floating for happiness or want to crawl into a hole for some respite, whether we feel like we are living our purpose or could not be further from feeling like ourselves, God is there.

Maybe that seems a little... disconcerting, especially during those times when we just want to be alone. But perhaps God's presence in those moments is less of a nagging parent, and more of a close friend or even a pet sitting silently by our side. Not judging our actions, but acknowledging our experiences and emotions.

How do you see God? During the good times, what does God look, feel, and sound like? And during the bad times?

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# Week of August 25

Tuesday: Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, (...)  
- Numbers 3:14

Wednesday: God heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.  
- Psalm 147:3

Thursday: Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."  
- John 20:27

Friday: So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.  
- Mark 16:19

Saturday: But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit (...)  
- Jude 1:20

Sunday: Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well."  
- Matthew 9:22

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# Monday, August 31

*So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*  
- Mark 16:8

The women's reaction in Mark's short original account of the resurrection is more than relatable: something unexpected happens that completely goes against all logic and the anticipated chain of events, so they run and at first try to process by themselves what they witnessed. If we were to find ourselves in their situation, I am sure that we would react the same way.

But there is the second, longer ending, of course: something happens that gives the women courage. Something happens, because the women eventually give the other disciples a recap, which then triggers all of the events from more appearances to Jesus' eventual ascension.

Especially considering the journey we have taken over the past three months – from the beginning of June until now – what would it take for us to move from the first ending of the story to the second? I would wager that it will not be a “one and done” situation either, but a process with twists and turns. Where do you think you are in the process at the moment?

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# Why a Summer Devotional?

Summer is typically a slow season in the liturgical calendar – there are no major festivals or changes in the color of the paraments: after Trinity Sunday (around the first week of June) and until Reformation Day (October 31), the only liturgical color is green. Of course, during Summer children are also out of school, and (despite the stress to parents), summer break is an opportunity for other sectors of our community to also take a collective breath.

Many congregations, then, use summer for a time of renewal. That is what this devotional is for, as well: renewal of our faith. This year, summer overlaps with the continued uncertainty, confusion, and pain of the COVID-19 pandemic, so the stories and verses in the booklet before you will explore stories of pain, uncertainty, and God's presence in the Old and New Testaments, interspersed with beloved scripture passages of telling of God's encouragement, understanding, and love.

A personal word from Vicar Raphaela, too: this devotional will continue beyond my time at Healing Waters. It pains me to have to leave you, but I hope that this devotional and all the ministry we have done together since October will continue to accompany you on your faith journey.

God's peace, blessing, and love to you all.

This devotional is brought to you by Healing Waters Parish, a parish of the Lutheran Church (ELCA).



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.