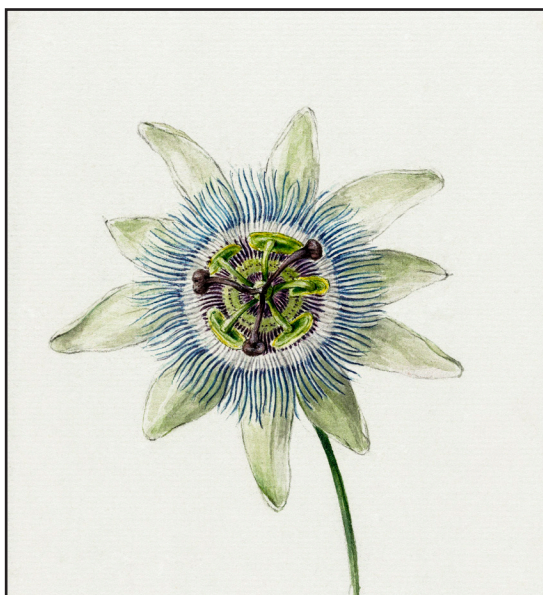


*The LORD is*  
**GRACIOUS**  
*and*  
**COMPASSIONATE**



*A Lent Devotional*



CHURCH OF THE  
**SAVIOR**



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## INTRODUCTION

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During the season of Lent, Christians for centuries have prepared themselves to celebrate Easter: not by building excitement and anticipation, as we in America do in the days leading up to Christmas, but by soberly acknowledging pain and sorrow and by repenting from sin. Lent is a somber season, begun on Ash Wednesday with the truth of our own mortality, the truth that we are dust to and to dust we will return.

And yet, Lent is not a season that asks us to wallow in the pain we experience, or to sink into guilt over our sins. No: during Lent, we take time to notice the dark places in our lives because God is with us in the darkness and will one day turn our nights into day. We examine ourselves for sin because it stands in the way of our relationships with God and others — and God wants to heal those relationships. Lent gives us a time to acknowledge sin and suffering (our own or in our communities) so that we can clearly see how much we need a Savior.

How we do this will vary in each season of our lives. Some years, a traditional Lenten fast may be exactly what we need to remind ourselves of our dependence on God. Other years, suffering may be so close at hand that we need instead the reminder that God meets us in our suffering. In the liturgy for Ash Wednesday, the celebrant invites us to observe a holy Lent “by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word,” an invitation that offers many paths for our Lenten disciplines.

As you use this devotional, I extend the same invitation to you. Because of the pandemic that has stretched on for nearly a year now, disrupting our lives and separating us from one another as we deny our own desires for the good of the community, the readings here focus on self-examination and meditating on God’s word. These devotionals — two for each week in Lent — are meant to help us see the places in our lives where we need to meet God.

As we engage in this self-examination and meditation, I invite you to remember that the Lord is gracious and compassionate. We can acknowledge the darkness of sin and suffering because God’s grace and love light our way. And as we walk through the season of Lent anchored in our gracious and compassionate God, we prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, who brings us new life.

—Sarah Lindsay

# ASH WEDNESDAY

## PSALM 103:8-14

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- <sup>8</sup> The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- <sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- <sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- <sup>13</sup> As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
- <sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.

## REFLECTION

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Read the psalm slowly. What words stand out to you? What are these words saying to you today?

Read the psalm again, or listen to it being read. Where in your life do you need God's compassion, grace and love?

Spend time in prayer asking for God to show you grace and compassion especially in your Lenten journey.



Salvador Dali, "Spiritus promptus est, caro vero infirma" ("The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"), 1964.

## FIRST WEEK IN LENT

### PSALM 25:1-10

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<sup>1</sup> O Lord, I give my life to you.

<sup>2</sup> I trust in you, my God!

Do not let me be disgraced,

or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat.

<sup>3</sup> No one who trusts in you will ever be disgraced,

but disgrace comes to those who try to deceive others.

<sup>4</sup> Show me the right path, O Lord;

point out the road for me to follow.

<sup>5</sup> Lead me by your truth and teach me,

for you are the God who saves me.

All day long I put my hope in you.

<sup>6</sup> Remember, O Lord, your compassion and unfailing love,

which you have shown from long ages past.

<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the rebellious sins of my youth.

Remember me in the light of your unfailing love,

for you are merciful, O Lord.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord is good and does what is right;

he shows the proper path to those who go astray.

<sup>9</sup> He leads the humble in doing right,

teaching them his way.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness

all who keep his covenant and obey his demands.

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Reflection questions for all the psalms adapted from *Psalms: Devotional Guide*, published by Illustrated Children's Ministry ([illustratedchildrensministry.com](http://illustratedchildrensministry.com)). Full-size coloring pages will be emailed each Sunday during Lent, or you may contact Sarah Lindsay for an emailed file. ([sarah@friendsofthesavior.org](mailto:sarah@friendsofthesavior.org)).



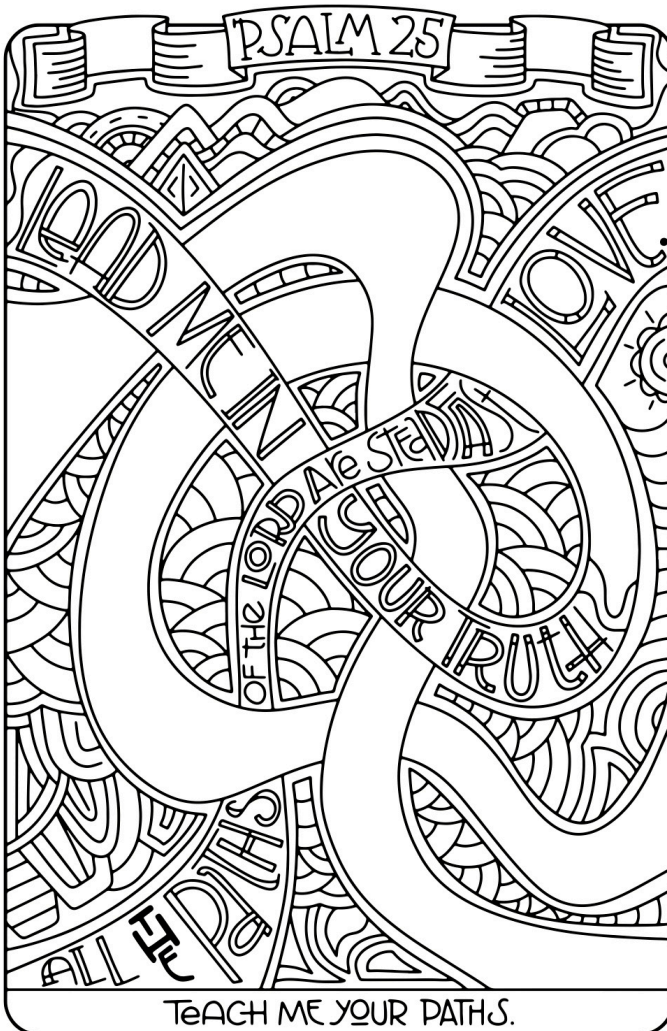
## REFLECTION

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Read the psalm slowly, noticing what words and images stand out and catch your attention.

Recall a time in your life when you were seemingly lost. What helped you get back on God's path of grace and truth?

Where in your life do you need the reminder of God's faithful leading?



## EXAMINATION: BEING FORMED

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Most of our days, and therefore most of our lives, are driven by habit and routine.

Our way of being-in-the-world works its way into us through ritual and repetition. James K.A. Smith explains that a particular view of “the good life” is ingrained in us through repetitive practices that motivate how we live and what we love.

We are shaped every day, whether we know it or not, by practices — rituals and liturgies that make us who we are. We receive these practices — which are often rote — not only from the church or the Scriptures but from the culture, from the “air around us.”

...

Whoever we are, whatever we believe, wherever we live, and whatever our consumer preferences may be, we spend our days doing things — we live in routines formed by habits and practices. Smith, following Augustine, argues that to be an alternative people is to be formed differently — to take up practices and habits that aim our love and desire towards God.

We don’t wake up daily and form a way of being-in-the-world from scratch, and we don’t think our way through every action of our day. We move in patterns that we have set over time, day by day. These habits and practices shape our loves, our desires, and ultimately who we are and what we worship.

Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*  
(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), pp. 29-30.

So, the question is, Are there habits and practices that we acquire without knowing it? Are there ritual forces in our culture that we perhaps naively immerse ourselves in — and are thus formed by — that, when we consider them more closely, are pointed at some ultimate end? Are there mundane routines that we participate in that, if we are attentive, function as thick practices aimed at a particular vision of the good life?

- What are some of the most significant habits and practices that really shape your actions and attitude — what you think and what you do?
- What does your time look like? What practices are you regularly immersed in each week? How much time is spent doing different sorts of activities?
- What do you think are the most important ritual forces in your life? And if you were honest with yourself, are these positive (forming you into the kind of person who embodies the kingdom of God) or negative (forming you into someone whose values and desires are antithetical to that kingdom, oriented towards another kingdom)?

James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*  
(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), p. 84.

## REFLECTION

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In the passage above, James K.A. Smith asks a series of questions about the habits we have and the way we spend our time. Take a moment to answer his question. What habits are shaping you? And are these habits that are shaping you into Christ-likeness?

Spend time talking to God about the habits that shape you. Give thanks for the positive habits you have, and (remembering God's compassion and grace) ask for help in those areas where you need to change or form new habits.

## SECOND WEEK IN LENT

### PSALM 22:23-31

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- <sup>23</sup> Praise the Lord, all you who fear him!  
Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!  
Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!
- <sup>24</sup> For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.  
He has not turned his back on them,  
but has listened to their cries for help.
- <sup>25</sup> I will praise you in the great assembly.  
I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.
- <sup>26</sup> The poor will eat and be satisfied.  
All who seek the Lord will praise him.  
Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.
- <sup>27</sup> The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him.  
All the families of the nations will bow down before him.
- <sup>28</sup> For royal power belongs to the Lord.  
He rules all the nations.
- <sup>29</sup> Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.  
Bow before him, all who are mortal,  
all whose lives will end as dust.
- <sup>30</sup> Our children will also serve him.  
Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord.
- <sup>31</sup> His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.  
They will hear about everything he has done.

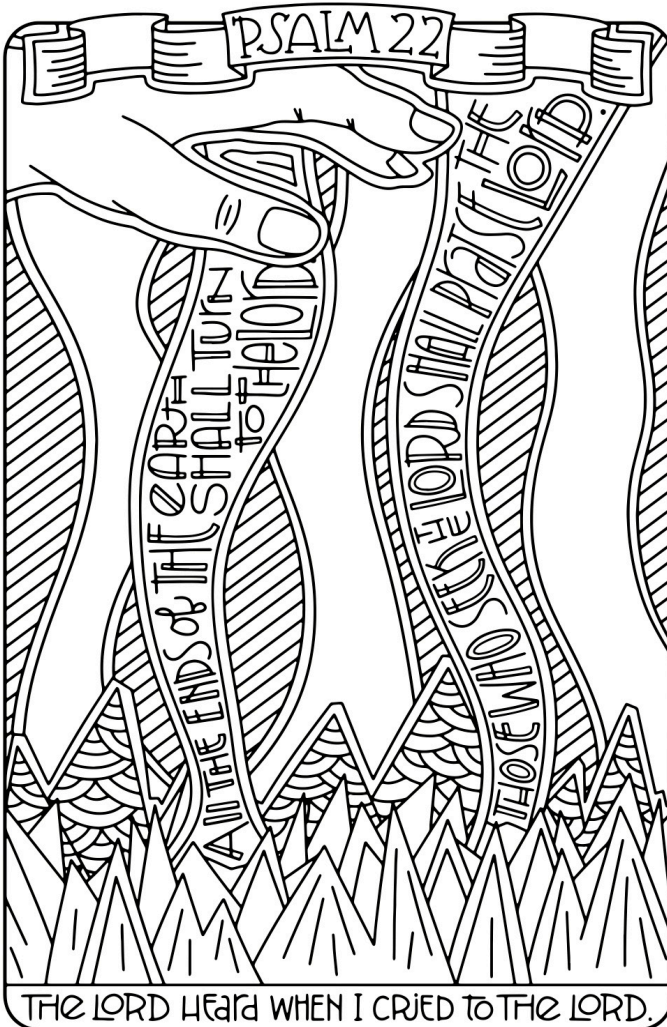
## REFLECTION

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Read the psalm slowly. What do you notice?

Who has told you about God and what God does? Have you shared with others the “wonders of the Lord”? What has that experience been like?

Spend time in prayer, praising God for those who have shared stories of God’s deeds and love with you.



## EXAMINATION: CARE FOR CREATION

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Shoulder to shoulder, hundreds of stout little birds pace the edge of the ebbing tide. All at once they burst up. Then flutter down, regroup, pace again.

It's an evening in late February, and everything in them tells the flock of red knots, Leave, soon. They're synchronizing a pole-to-pole flight precisely with the movements of creatures a continent away. As with aerial acrobats, a gap in connections is apt to be fatal.

For almost five months they've been preparing themselves for this feat. Last October they dropped onto this thumb of land at the southern end of the earth famished, having spent every last coin of strength flying 9,500 miles from the Canadian Arctic — after they'd labored to hatch and fledge a clutch of chicks on the unforgiving tundra. Through blinding gales they've probed the tidal plain of Tierra del Fuego, gobbling little clams and mussels whole. They've kept their intention singular: to regain weight and rebuild breast muscle. Their return trip, not a mile shorter, will perhaps cost them more. Now the weight of an avocado, they preen the new set of flight feathers they've grown for this moment. Ready, sensing the tick of their internal clocks, still they wait for better weather. Stiff winds and storms sap precious reserves and skew their impeccable timing.

Finally, a clear, calm window opens in the evening sky. With a shuddering swoosh they lift and wheel, curving smoothly, sinuously upward, upward, one bird never jostling another, one vast, winged body.

Up the South American coast they'll hop, aiming for beaches of northern Brazil. Arriving in April, they're half an avocado's heft. And brighter. Along the way gray and white feathers on their heads and breasts began to molt and grow in a warm cinnamon. These are the feathers that name the knots "red" and attract mates eight weeks hence. As their breeding plumage fills in, the birds scour these tidal flats, avid to refuel for the journey's next, most precarious leg. But each year there are fewer and smaller shellfish in the warmer, more acidic ocean. Each year the knots must work harder to regain the weight lost getting here. Some won't.

The flock stays and feeds as long as it dares. But its appointment with an ancient creature farther up the Atlantic insists. So on an early

May evening they rise again, white bellies gleaming in the twilight. They climb to twenty thousand feet, stroking above the open ocean, guided only by the stars and motions of the sun, three days, four days — barring hurricanes — no food, no water, calling a soft knupp-knupp to each other across the thin air.

If all is as it should be, the knots will slide down the last of 3,500 miles and land on the beaches of Delaware Bay just as horseshoe crabs are rowing back out to sea. With the full and new moons of May the crabs swim ashore and spawn, leaving billions of green eggs the size of pinheads. Ravenous, emaciated, the birds pump their bills up and down in the sand like sewing-machine needles. Most of the world's red knots are here, now. Nowhere else and at no other time is their table laid with these tiny gems of pure energy.

And just when they need them. Though the little birds have flown 7,500 miles from Tierra del Fuego, 2,000 more stretch ahead — and then the intensity of mating, laying, hatching, and defending chicks on the Arctic tundra. To be ready, each one labors to double its weight again, which means swallowing four hundred thousand little green eggs in about twelve days. Because the knots have an appointment with lives in the Arctic too. There, during a narrow slice of June, insects will hatch — food for the chicks that must also be hatched by then. The knots must leave Delaware Bay by the end of May, or the offspring they've not yet conceived will break from their eggs into air empty of insect larvae and starve.

On the month's last day, one bird rests in a woman's hand. She can feel his heart flutter within his too-narrow breast. Like many of the knots her team has weighed, measured, and banded, he has not eaten anywhere near his egg quota. For years, fishermen took too many crabs from the bay. Plus, a roiling storm — of which there are more as water and air currents around the globe warm — confused the spawning schedule of the crabs that are left. And storm surge stole the bit of unbuilt beach where these expected to bury their eggs. All that loss means this little bird is apt to be lost too. Seventy-five percent of the world's red knots have been lost in the woman's lifetime.

It's why she's come. She and her team have synchronized their lives with those of the knot. All along the flyway they count, measure, and monitor — from the size of South American shellfish to the number of

Arctic nests. With tens of thousands of data points they paint pictures of wonder and loss for all of us. See this palmful of bird, the woman says, see his magnificent endurance and resilience — all of it evoked for exquisite timing. Imagine living exquisitely intertwined with creatures worlds away. What might be evoked in us?

Kneeling in the sand the woman presses her cheek against the quiet bird's soft wing and breathes what she wants to be strength, and is surely love, into his neck. Then opens her hand.

Gayle Boss, *Wild Hope: Stories for Lent from the Vanishing*  
(Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2020), pp. 17-19.

## REFLECTION

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Notice how connected the red knots are to so many other creatures in so many parts of the world. How are you connected to the natural world? You might think about the food that you eat, the clothing that you wear, or the places where you enjoy nature.

Reflect on the command God gave to the first humans to rule over the natural world (Genesis 1:28). What does it mean to wisely fulfill this command? What are you doing to care for the world?

Spend time in prayer, praising God for the beautiful interconnectedness of creation and asking for wise stewardship that cares for all parts of God's creation.



## THIRD WEEK IN LENT

### PSALM 19

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- <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- <sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.
- <sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.
- <sup>4</sup> Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.
- <sup>5</sup> It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
- <sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.
- <sup>7</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.
- <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the Lord are right,  
giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the Lord are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.
- <sup>9</sup> The fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The decrees of the Lord are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.
- <sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup> By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

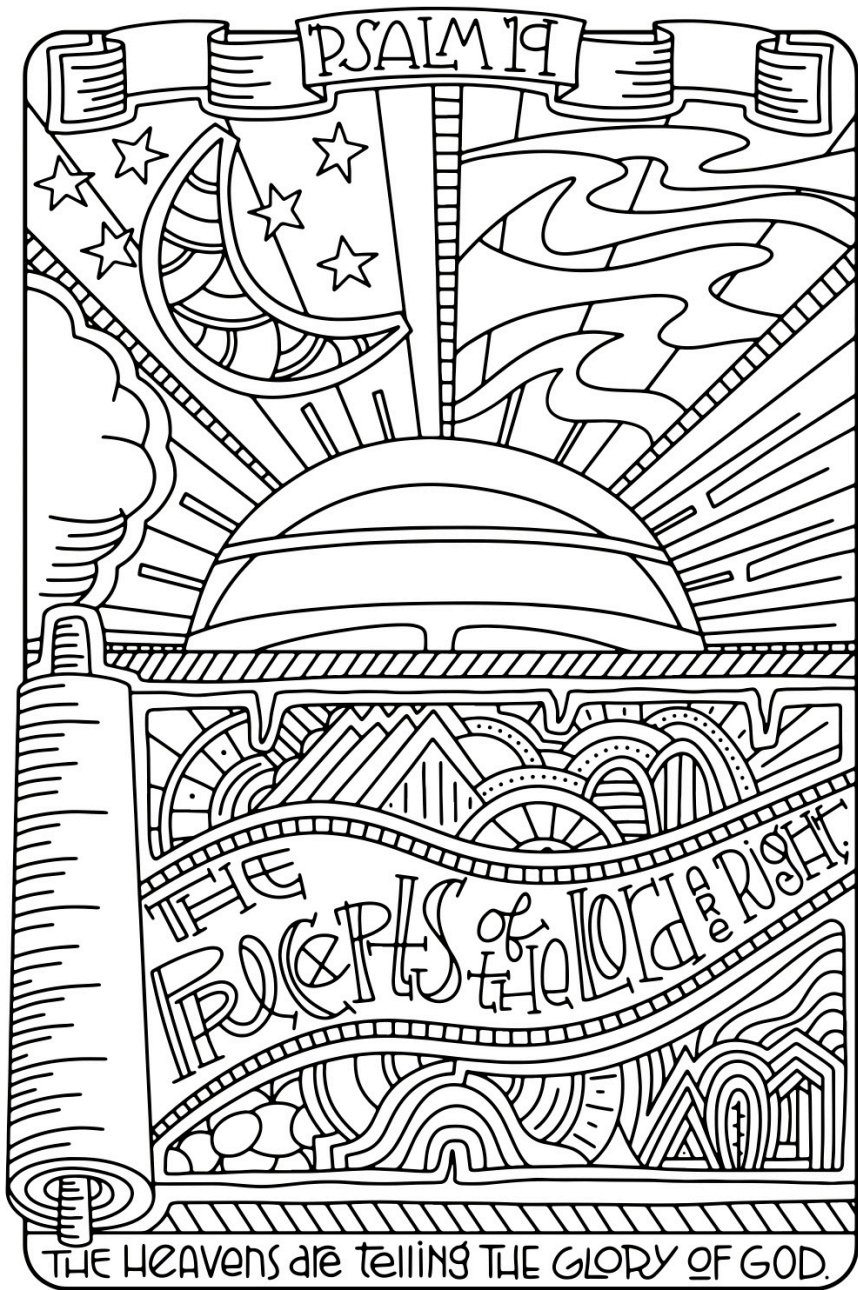
## REFLECTION

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Read the psalm slowly and notice the words or images that strike you.

What can you learn about God by looking up into the heavens? How can you continue to be awed by creation in this era of scientific advances?

Do you struggle to find joy in any particular commandments or precepts? Bring this struggle to God in prayer.



## EXAMINATION: JUSTICE

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We need Jesus-shaped imaginations that have been delivered from their captivity. Jesus-shaped imaginations provide a robust and multidimensional way of knowing in Christ. There are elements that ought to shape the kind of world we hunger for as Christians. A Jesus-shaped imagination must, through Scripture, wrestle with God like Jacob. We must know the stories of Scripture and see their culmination in the life and teachings of Jesus. A Jesus-shaped imagination that is delivered from captivity yields to the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us as we face contemporary problems, and makes the resurrected presence of Jesus available to us. It is an imagination that flows from participating in a local congregation seeking to organize its collective life, in both its gathering and scattering in society, in awareness of the reigning presence of Christ. Such imagining will inevitably cultivate dangerous escatological (God's future for us) dreams of God's delivered world, a world that has come and is still yet to come.

This new society of God was ignited by Jesus, the true revolutionary, who subverted our sin and death-corroded ways of living that stand against God's desire for us. When we join this revolutionary way of Jesus that flows like a river, we see that it runs through history from below. We learn what freedom and justice really mean. Eventually our taste buds for the world as it is begin to change because we have tasted and seen God's deliverance first hand. If we have indeed glimpsed God's just and righteous society and are yielding to the Spirit in our discipleship, then we have an opportunity to join the tradition of dreaming in Christ.

...

We can and must name sinful and evil practices as such. Christians have a unique language to diagnose our world. Sin, when it is not reduced to superficial religiosity and inner piety, can comprehensively unveil our fallen structures and powers, relationships, practices, and identities. And we should not only describe the world as it is; we should be inspiring others with the world God has dreamed up for us, and what ultimately will be. Moral imagination and prophetic imagination go hand in hand. A prophetic word encourages us to remember that oppressive

empires will not last forever. It offers everyone an opportunity to repent from domination and to live into God's new world that is emerging from the margins of society. The question is, Can you imagine God's deliverance?

Drew G.I. Hart, *Who Will Be a Witness?*  
(Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2020), pp. 29-31

## REFLECTION

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Hart talks about the importance of a "Jesus-shaped imagination." What do you think this imagination looks like? Why is this type of imagination important, especially when we think about advocating for justice?

Can you imagine God's deliverance? What does it look like? What does it feel like?

As you pray today, ask God to shape your imagination so that you can envision the kingdom of God.

## FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

### PSALM 107:1-3, 17-22

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- <sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.
- <sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—  
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,  
<sup>3</sup> those he gathered from the lands,  
from east and west, from north and south.
- <sup>17</sup> Some became fools through their rebellious ways  
and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.
- <sup>18</sup> They loathed all food  
and drew near the gates of death.
- <sup>19</sup> Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.
- <sup>20</sup> He sent out his word and healed them;  
he rescued them from the grave.
- <sup>21</sup> Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.
- <sup>22</sup> Let them sacrifice thank offerings  
and tell of his works with songs of joy.

### REFLECTION

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Read the psalm slowly, and notice the words that catch your attention.

Look back on your life. Where have you seen God's presence and deliverance?

What is something that you are thankful for today? Spend time thanking God for the ways that you have experienced God's unfailing love.



PSALM 107

LET THEM  
THANK  
THE LORD  
FOR THE  
LORD'S

LET THEM TELL  
OF THE LORD'S  
DEEDS...

STEADFAST  
LOVE

THE LORD  
SAVED THEM.

SOME WERE SICK

THEY  
CRIED  
TO THE  
LORD  
IN THEIR  
TROUBLE.

THE LORD'S STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

## EXAMINATION: BODIES IN COMMUNITY

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Every morning, I wake up and the reality of our new normal [living through a pandemic] washes over me. Oh yeah, this. Living in the twilight zone still.

But when I lean in, pushing past my initial feelings of anxiety, dread, and paralysis, I realize that maybe this experience is not so new. Yes, the pandemic is unprecedented in its global scale. But it reveals what we already know about our human condition. Our bodies are porous to the dangerous outside world. We can die from something invisible to the naked eye, from microscopic little balls of virus with spikes coming out like a crown. The threat lies within our borders, on our skin, in our lungs. Our bodies are so vulnerable.

Our lives hang by delicate gossamer threads woven into a web of reciprocal human actions. When we don't reach out to rethread the ties, to patch the holes in our communal lives, people will fall through the holes. Some will die. Sometimes breathing is hard, and you need others — people who make ventilators, people who fund and allocate and know how to run ventilators — to help you breathe. Breathe in: You are human. You could get COVID-19. Breathe out: You are not alone. We are all in this together.

The movements that I have learned on my journey with chronic pain are the same movements that can ground us in this era of coronavirus, or at any point when fear triggers that knee-jerk reaction to flee from our bodies. We move from being passive onlookers to active participants — partnering with God and members of our community to bring healing. We move from wishing ourselves back to a previous normal, to the way things were pre-pandemic, to accepting what is imperfect and noticing what is good about now. Now is the only moment we have. We move from seeing ourselves as free-floating agents protecting ourselves and our own to seeing ourselves as part of a wide, rich human community. We have the tools we need to recover. We just need to share with each other. We can move from fight, flight, or freeze reactions to presence, to reassociation. We are safer when we work together.

Liuan Huska, *Hurting Yet Whole*  
(Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), pp. 200-201.



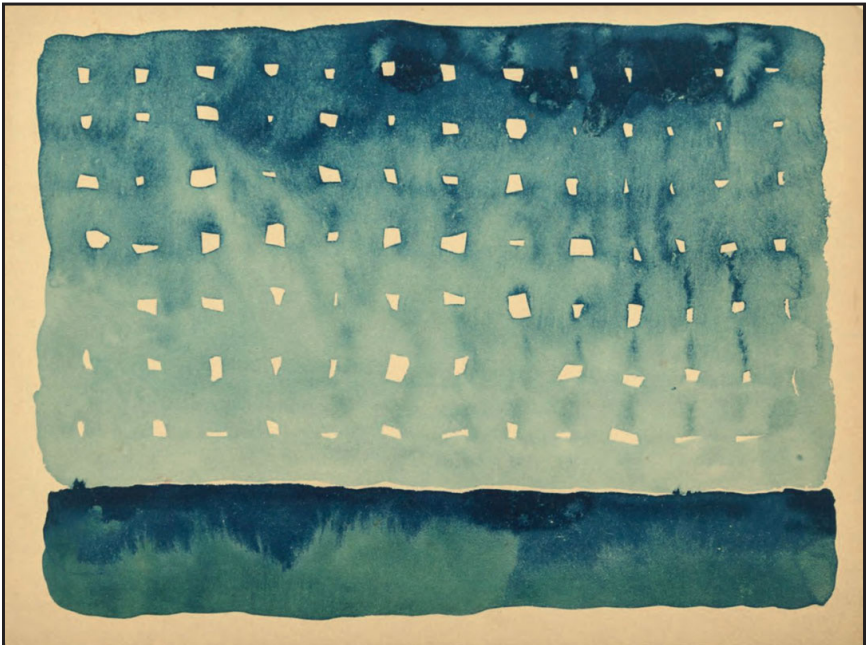
## REFLECTION

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What emotions have you experienced as you have lived through the last year of what Huska calls “our new normal”? How have you grounded yourself through these emotions?

What does it mean to see yourself as part of a community when the new normal can feel very isolating?

Today, pray for your community — friends, family, neighbors, or whoever may be a part of the community around you.



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Georgia O'Keefe, *Starlit Night*, 1917.

## FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

### PSALM 51:1-12

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- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
because of your unfailing love.  
Because of your great compassion,  
blot out the stain of my sins.
- <sup>2</sup> Wash me clean from my guilt.  
Purify me from my sin.
- <sup>3</sup> For I recognize my rebellion;  
it haunts me day and night.
- <sup>4</sup> Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;  
I have done what is evil in your sight.  
You will be proved right in what you say,  
and your judgment against me is just.
- <sup>5</sup> For I was born a sinner—  
yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> But you desire honesty from the womb,  
teaching me wisdom even there.
- <sup>7</sup> Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Oh, give me back my joy again;  
you have broken me—  
now let me rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Don't keep looking at my sins.  
Remove the stain of my guilt.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God.  
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not banish me from your presence,  
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and make me willing to obey you.

## REFLECTION

---

Read the psalm slowly. What parts of it seem like particularly appropriate prayers for your life today?

Are there sins that you need to confess today? Is there a time when you experienced God's forgiveness? Bring your prayers of repentance and thanksgiving to God, remembering that God is gracious and compassionate.



## EXAMINATION: LAMENT

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During one of the more intense periods in the writing of this book [*Prophetic Lament*], I entered into a week of what I can only describe as a time of depression. I don't think of myself as a depressive personality, so the entire week caught me a bit off-guard. I experienced a deep sense of sorrow that I could not shake. For even a brief moment, I experienced a glimpse of the depth of lament, an angst, a spiritual dis-ease that impacted every facet of my life. It was not an emotion that could be easily manipulated or explained away. There was no quick getting over it or "manning up" and moving on. Not even video games with my son could minimize this angst. There was only this profound sense that something was not quite right.

Part of the struggle during that week was that I was researching the section for this book on Nazi Germany and the German church's complicity in the rise of the Nazi party. I saw images of Christian pastors doing the "Heil Hitler" salute alongside SS officers. I saw an image of a German Christian academic who had grown a mustache to look exactly like Adolf Hitler's. I read about the horrific apathy and even participation of the German church that gave justification to genocide. The historical failure of the German church compelled me to reflect on the ongoing failures of the American church in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The church is Christ's bride. The church offers hope for a broken world. The church should embody the fullness of God's presence and should express God's shalom. But the church often does not live up to this promise. We've exchanged the glory of God for the lies of this earth. It was an easy journey to become depressed about the current state of the church. Lament emerged as an uncomfortable but necessary response to the absence of shalom in the church.

...

Both the struggle and the liberation of the book of Lamentations is in knowing that there can be complete honesty before God. God's grace provides us the freedom to recognize that we fall short of the glory of God and that we will continue to do so. This side of heaven, we are confronted with the need to lament over a church that fails to live up to God's standards. But that failure ultimately results in a freedom to

believe in the hope of God's restoration. Acknowledging the culpability of the American evangelical church in the history of racial injustice is not a fruitless exercise. This process is not dwelling on the problem or failing to "get over it." It is the very real recognition that sin has wreaked havoc with our existing systems and structures and that we fail to measure up to God's value system. We must confess our desire to set up human standards of success over God's standards. We do not define shalom, God does.

...

Lamentations is a reminder of our place in creation. We are not elevated above God or even above God's creation. We do not stand in the place of Christ, able to incarnate ourselves into another community as if we could operate as the Messiah. Our only hope for meaning and worth is in the fullness of Christ as God's created being. Lament recognizes our frailty as created beings and the need to acknowledge this shortcoming before God. Lament demands that we are willing to dwell in the space of our humanity without quickly resorting to our triumphalistic narrative to justify our worth.

Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament*  
(Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), pp. 137-9.

## REFLECTION

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What has been your experience with lament?

Think of a time you were tempted to proclaim your value instead of acknowledging your "frailty as created beings." How might lament be a helpful discipline in these situations?

What are you feeling called to lament right now — a situation in your life, in your community, in the church? Spend time in prayer as you bring your lament to God.

## NOTES

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