

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 7:9–17

Holy Remembrance

“They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

.....
*for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be
their shepherd,*

*and he will guide them to springs of the water
of life.”*

Revelation 7:16–17

Today is an especially holy day: Sunday and All Saints Day, when we remember with love all the individuals who have gone before us and are now with God. In my church, the pastor reads the names of all the members who have died that year and tolls a bell for each soul. The congregation remains silent.

During this ritual, the veil between our lives and the lives of those who are with God feels particularly thin. We are in the space where we have previously worshiped together, and we are coming before God to remember those who have died. At the same time, those who have died are with God, to whom we are drawing close. The moment is holy. And when the silence is broken at last and we all draw breath to sing, we sing—all of us—together.

—
*O God in whom we live and move and have our
being, thank you for our lives and for the lives and
influence of those who came before us. Amen.*

Lindy Thompson, Franklin, Tennessee

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE: JOSHUA 24:14–18

We Get to Choose

“Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Joshua 24:15

I homeschooled my three children, and the curriculum I chose is a Christian one with a heart for the wide world in all its variation and differences. When we studied ancient cultures, I remember that every time I read the word “god” to my son, I would say, “small *g* god.” No need to disparage other belief systems; the use of the lowercase *g* did it for me. By that time, my son knew that you capitalize important things. By distinguishing God from god, I was teaching what was important, what was deserving of special distinction.

We are going to serve something. We get to choose what that something is. What a privilege to serve the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth!

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God, you have given us free will and the ability to choose whom we will serve. Please help us to join Joshua in his bold and triumphant claim: as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord! Amen.

Lindy Thompson, Franklin, Tennessee

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2020

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE: JOSHUA 24:19–25

Where Our Hearts Will Be

He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

Joshua 24:23

There are so many things that we worship and revere other than God. We know we are not supposed to make idols for ourselves, but we do it all the time. I speak from experience; this is a universal struggle.

I will list some things humans might revere more than God. See what makes you feel the prick of conscience or the squirm of discomfort: notifications on our social media accounts; busyness, because only the busy are important; money; well-behaved children; physical appearance; our cars; our homes; our visible piety.

Where we spend our time, our money, and our energy is where our hearts will be. We get to choose, today. We get to make a choice. Thanks be to God for new mercies every morning.

God, help us pause, help us see, and help us choose what you would have us choose. We are not in this alone; we know we are part of the body of Christ, and you are with us, God. Help us choose, today. Amen.

Lindy Thompson, Franklin, Tennessee

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 78:1–7

Learning with Children

*We will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.*

Psalm 78:4b

I periodically lead children's worship at my church during one of the services. Parents get to hear the sermon without having to say *shh* every sixty seconds, and I have the privilege of leading an age-appropriate worship service for three- to five-year olds. This may sound like a potential disaster, but it is magic. Nothing teaches me more.

There is a rug they all sit around, and we lay out a cloth to make a sacred space and place on it three symbols to represent God: a small globe for God the Creator, a cross for God the Son, and a bell for God the Holy Spirit. We sing, I read a Bible story, there is a play period, and then at the end we all get back around the rug. Each child says what they are thankful for, and then I light a candle and show how the flame is in one place, but when I snuff it out, the smoke, like the love of God, goes everywhere, unlimited.

What is more important for the “coming generation” to learn than that?



God, may I be openhearted like a child. Amen.

Lindy Thompson, Franklin, Tennessee

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2020

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE: AMOS 5:21–24

People First

*But let justice flow down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

Amos 5:24

Concepts can be vague. Ideas can be nebulous. Verbal agreement is easy. Giving something a thumbs-up requires little effort. Talk is cheap.

People are not vague, nebulous, easy, effortless, or cheap. How we treat people—*all people*—is where the rubber of the gospel meets the road.

Jesus overlooked no one. Jesus wanted fair treatment for everyone. If we are followers of Jesus, we will behave like him and love like him. We will not be an impediment. We will not stand in the way of justice with our arms folded, an immovable boulder in the center of a river. We will make space in our hearts and our world for the movement of God, make room for everyone, and do what is ours to do to facilitate justice flowing down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.



God, you have work for me to do. Lead me where you want me to be, and help me do what you would have me do to bring forth your kin-dom, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Lindy Thompson, Franklin, Tennessee

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 70:1–5

Our Need for God

*But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay!*

Psalm 70:5

As I am writing these devotions, this verse feels especially appropriate. It is the end of March, and the daily news is devastating. In fact, today I am fasting from the news and social media because I can feel myself sliding into sadness. Of course, bad things do happen, and sadness is a part of life, but I don't need compulsively checking CNN—as if I can change reality by knowing it, which I can't. Amid the flying arrows of terrible news, here is what I know is true:

God is good.
God made us and loves us.
God is with us.
We are with each other.

Friend, take care of yourself. You matter in God's eyes, and your life is of significance. You are not alone. We are all in this together, and best of all, God is with us.

*The entire world is poor and needy right now, God.
Hasten to us! You are our help and our deliverer.
Please do not delay! Amen.*

Lindy Thompson, Franklin, Tennessee

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2020

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 25:1–13

Awake

Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Matthew 25:13

I'm sorry, but you have to be awake for this. No sleeping. No sedation. No looking out the window while thinking about the grocery list. Birth, death, and rebirth are all happening right now, all around you, and you are a part of it. You have to be awake for this.

Which part are you experiencing right now? Are you birthing something? Is something new coming into being through your sweat, blood, and tears? Is part of you dying? Do you feel it draining away? Are you momentarily paralyzed and fascinated by the emptying until suddenly the pain hits you and you do not think you can do this?

Are you being reborn? Are you being pulled up through the flame, dross consumed, brightly shining and reflecting glory everywhere? Is the memory of the agony already being replaced by the joyful astonishment of being alive, being here, drawing in the Spirit with each breath until you become part of it?

No apologies; this is your life. But here is the blessing: you get to be awake for it.

God, thank you for my life. Help me to live intentionally and gratefully. Amen.

Lindy Thompson, Franklin, Tennessee

TIME FLIES

SCRIPTURE: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1–11

A Frightening Experience

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

1 Thessalonians 5:2b

There was a time in 1969 when I had not been sleeping or eating much and had been reading the Bible and taking every word literally. I do not remember what I had been reading, but I was convinced that Jesus was coming immediately. I was terrified! I grabbed my two young children and ran across a baseball field screaming: “He’s coming! He’s coming!”

Early followers of Jesus also may have been anxious for Jesus’ return. Paul assured them that Jesus would come suddenly, and they did not need to concern themselves with dates.

More than two thousand years later we still wait, but after fifty years studying the Bible carefully and with others, I am no longer afraid but look forward to seeing Jesus, whether in this world or the next.



Dear Jesus, help us to remember that we are children of light. Thank you that we do not need to be afraid, because you are with us both now and forever. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2020

TIME FLIES

SCRIPTURE: JUDGES 4:1–7

Sitting under a Palm Tree

She used to sit under the palm of Deborah.

Judges 4:5

In 1966, I was not thinking that God would suddenly appear in the sky. It was so peaceful living on the remote Palauan island of Kayangel, sitting beneath a palm tree with my baby daughter. Life was so simple: no electricity, no phones, no wi-fi. We were the only Americans living on the island.

At the time I had no idea that more than fifty years later, I would once again be living in an isolated fashion, this time in Massachusetts due to the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike Deborah, a prophetess thousands of years ago, I do not know what the future holds.

Was the peace I experienced back in Palau real? I was not afraid of anything. Yet by 1969, my life would never be the same because of my fear that Jesus was coming again. For fifty years, I have struggled to calm myself emotionally when I become too manic or too fearful. Now the world is in panic mode, and I sit here quietly trying to meet a deadline.

*Whether we on a peaceful island or in the midst of
turmoil, God's peace is available. Amen.*

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

TIME FLIES

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 90:1–8

A Thousand Years

*For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past.*

Psalm 90:4

God is not in a hurry. Imagine having all the time in the world; one day to God is like a thousand years. When Jesus told the disciples he would return, they assumed he would return in their lifetime. I used to believe that Jesus would return in my lifetime, but as I grow older, I am not so sure. After studying Revelation last year, I now believe that tribulation started when Jesus was resurrected and has continued on for many centuries.

I was born in the middle of World War II, and that may have affected me as an infant, growing up among people made anxious by war. Though life in the twenty-first century offers many advantages, many still live anxiously, wanting God to step in and fix things on our own timetable.



*Lord, help us to wait patiently for your kingdom and
for the time when we will see you face-to-face. Amen.*

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2020

TIME FLIES

SCRIPTURE: ZEPHANIAH 1:7, 14–18

Keep Silence

*Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is at hand.*

Zephaniah 1:7

In some places, we hear church bells ringing, beckoning people to come to church. In others, a gong is sounded to quiet the congregation. In a service I attended recently, a man at the front was seated by many large brass gongs. We were told to be silent for twenty minutes! Seeing the large gong, we expected a loud noise. The leader assured us it would not be loud. One by one he tapped the gongs, and it was a most pleasant experience. To be silent with a congregation of more than a hundred people was very peaceful, but some fell asleep.

Most people are not able to be silent very long in a group. I remember one pastor trying to encourage a group to sit quietly for five minutes. She never asked them to do that again! It is very difficult to be silent with all the distractions around us, but being silent can be a very peaceful and relaxing endeavor that is beneficial to us all.



*Dear God of silence, help us to await your coming
patiently, together and with love for one another.
Amen.*

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

TIME FLIES

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 25:14–30

Talents

“Well done, good and faithful servant!”

Matthew 25:23 (NIV)

Practice, practice, practice. In the past two years, I have attended many tai chi classes, I have taken art lessons, and I have tried to play the keyboard. Each of these pursuits takes time and has been beneficial, but because I do not take time to practice, I am not moving forward and improving these skills.

However, writing is something that I work at almost every day. We are all given some gifts, and as we use this gift to help others, we are doing what we can to be good and faithful servants of God. As we encourage others to use their gifts, we show forth God’s love while we wait patiently for God’s return.

As I approach my eighties, time seems to be going faster and faster, and I have had to choose carefully where I will use my time. My caring husband has been urging me to either fix up my old computer or get a new one, and just recently, God provided a new computer so that I can use my gifts to bless others.



Thank you, God, that you provide instruments with which to use our talents and gifts. Help us to use our time better, finding new ways to love one another.

Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

TIME FLIES

SCRIPTURE: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1–11

Encourage One Another

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

I see myself as someone who is as easily discouraged as encouraged. My personality is very childlike, and I can sometimes be more childish than I would like. In a matter of minutes, my emotions can swing from extreme happiness to a place where I am ready to give up. When I am depressed, I just want to quit everything.

One Sunday at an early morning Bible study, I was still trying to heal from an argument I had had with my husband the night before. I complained that my husband spends most of his time trying to please me. The entire group of six adults burst out laughing! Although that did help me to see how silly I was being, one woman kindly said that a friend of hers also has this problem; her husband is a carpenter and is constantly wanting to do work around the house. She was able to empathize, and it was enough to encourage me to keep on going.

God of encouragement, help us to encourage others to move forward with you. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

TIME FLIES

SCRIPTURE: ZEPHANIAH 1:7, 12–18

Voices

*Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is at hand.*

Zephaniah 1:7a

It was as if a hurricane had swept through our home. I don't know what happened to that still small voice we'd talked about in our prayer time that morning! My husband, Jim, decided I needed a new writing space, which involved moving tables, books, and papers. What a mess! When I finally sat down, I found that my computer would not start. Alone at home, I heard a quiet voice urging me to try starting the computer again. To my surprise, it worked!

Jim and I had chosen the word *silence* to meditate on this year, but in the first few months of the year, we actually spent very little time in silence together. After many churches closed because of the coronavirus, Jim and I were watching a live internet service together, and the pastor asked us to be silent for two minutes. It was such a gratifying experience to know that, despite our isolation, we were learning to be silent before the Lord together.



Dear God, help us to listen for your voice until we see you face-to-face. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2020

GIVING THANKS

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 25:31–46

Food Pantry

When was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food?

Matthew 25:37b

Each Friday afternoon, a miracle happens. People from the whole community gather to help others receive food. In four years, the First Parish food pantry went from serving two or three people to serving over a hundred families. The pantry at our church is run by volunteers, some of whom are from other churches, the synagogue, or nearby towns. Other needs are satisfied: the pantry provides clothes; games for the children, who wait patiently; pet food for cats and dogs; and prayers for what we cannot provide, such as housing or healing for physical and emotional wounds.

First Parish is a small but beautiful New England sanctuary, and some may think it odd when they enter to see the produce covering the front pews. The non-perishables are stored in the balcony, and everything must be cleared away when the shoppers leave. It is a huge undertaking, but it encourages me each week to see people working so diligently to help feed others.

God, thank you for all those who devote so much time to feeding others. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2020

GIVING THANKS

SCRIPTURE: EZEKIEL 34:20–24

God Is the Judge

I will judge between sheep and sheep.

Ezekiel 34:22b

For many years, I tried to convince everyone to believe as I believe. My oldest sister adamantly resisted my efforts. She died in 1995, and I so wish we could have another conversation. I give thanks for Alice and think often of her love for me, her baby sister. Remembering her love helps me to work harder and stops me from quitting.

She never gave up. She was willing to do whatever her doctors asked to try to fight ovarian cancer and stay alive. She was not afraid to read anything and everything. She loved Jesus, but she read about other faiths. I am so thankful that I have stopped judging others, leaving judgment to God, who declares “I will judge between sheep and sheep.”

As I meditated in my garden one day, I decided that many plants in my garden could be called weeds. Milkweed appeared one year, and then I was able to enjoy raising butterflies from the caterpillars on the plant. Maybe it's not for me to say what is a weed.



Dear Jesus, thank you that you are the judge. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

GIVING THANKS

SCRIPTURE: EZEKIEL 34:11–16

Lost and Found

For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.

Ezekiel 34:11

God searches for us. God finds us each day and brings us back—not just once, but over and over. I am so thankful that God does not give up searching for me every day as I stray away from that perfect place of peace. Each day, after experiencing contentment with God while in prayer, I still find myself getting easily annoyed and need to be found again soon after.

I am learning to use a new computer and the latest Office program, and to me this is one of the most frustrating examples of a situation in which it is easy for me to lose my temper. I am looking for what has been saved in documents, on flash drives, on my desktop, and in other places that are not visible until I click on the right button. Things get saved all over this computer, in more than one place. I am glad that we have a God who can find us anywhere and who does not give up on bringing us back into the everlasting arms.



Thank you, God, that you continue to bring us home as the shepherd searches for the sheep. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

GIVING THANKS

SCRIPTURE: EPHESIANS 1:15–23

All Things

And he has put all things under his feet.

Ephesians 1:22a

I have a ninety-five-year-old friend who claims there are no absolutes. But isn't she declaring an absolute by saying that? I find the idea of a sovereign God very comforting. Yet, as I meet others who do not agree with me, I begin to question my own beliefs.

I know I am not God. Is this an absolute? If God declares that everything is under the feet of Jesus, I am thankful to just accept this and be grateful. God is awesome! As I worship God with others, it helps me to strengthen my faith. Over the years, I have been taught some things that I now believe were not true, but I pray that I will continue to believe that God is in control, even when sometimes this may be difficult to understand. God is God and can choose to intervene at any time, but sometimes God lets us work out our problems ourselves.



Thank you, God, for all the times we feel your presence. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2020

GIVING THANKS
SCRIPTURE: PSALM 100

A Quiet Joy

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth

Psalm 100:1

More than twenty years ago, I realized that a quiet joy was what was needed to calm an infant. I have a rather boisterous personality, and I learned that this loud style can frighten some infants. Being exuberant is not going to work when trying to get a baby to stop crying. Years ago, when people were not so frightened of strangers, I remember holding a baby in the park and being able to calm it down when others had failed. All of my children stopped crying when we picked them up and cuddled them.

The world has become more and more noisy, and even in the small city where I live, trucks, cars, carpenters, and alarms continually interrupt our peace and quiet. Let us be thankful for the parks and trails in this nation, where we can still enjoy the quiet joy of God's creation and be comforted.



God, thank you that you are always near to quiet our fears and to allow us to shout for joy in a way that is pleasing to all the world. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

GIVING THANKS

SCRIPTURE: EPHESIANS 1:15–19

Unceasing Thanks

I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

Ephesians 1:16

Did you ever pray unceasingly to give thanks for anyone? Paul seems to be someone who is a bit fanatical, like me. Yet I do not ever remember praying unceasingly when thanking God for anyone.

Since 2009, I have been recording my morning prayers in the little black composition books I use to take notes. Being a very disorganized person, I am surprised to find that I have done anything on a regular, daily basis. But on my shelf are sixteen books filled with daily entries thanking God for a bright, sunny day or other blessings. Even so, I have never thanked God unceasingly for anyone. I do not think I know anyone else who has ever prayed unceasingly for me.

Even though my prayers are not “unceasing,” praying and thanking God every morning for something helps me to start the day out right.



O God, help us to give thanks unceasingly for all that you have created and all that you provide. Amen.

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2020

GIVING THANKS

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 100

Enduring Love

*Steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.*

Psalm 100:5

My faith journey has been cyclical—vibrant at times and less so at others. Am I wishy-washy? Do I not have a strong faith? I have more questions than answers. My husband tries so hard to communicate his beliefs to me, and even though we share the same religion, we seem at times to know a different God. Traveling from one denomination to another, thankfully, the same God of love is in all these places.

What I should do or not do is not as important as the fact that Jesus loves me. God loves us all, now and forever. Whether I love God and neighbor is important to me, but without the knowledge of God cheering me along the way and loving me through other people, birds, flowers, trees, sunsets, butterflies, or sunshine, life would not be as gratifying. Seeing God in everything gives vibrancy to my faith and reminds me that God is always there.



*Dear Lord, thank you that your steadfast love has
endured through all generations and will continue.
Amen.*

Brenda Marshall, Newburyport, Massachusetts

LIVING GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

Daily Waiting

God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:9

Paul's encouraging letter was meant to help the Corinthians wait. But he was met with unfocused minds and hearts filled with selfish wants. The Corinthians were fighting, and discord was making a home in their lives. They had temporarily forgotten that God is faithful.

How busy our lives sometimes become! The tendency is to allow our stuff and our desires to define us. In the process, we close ourselves off from God and all that God wants to do in and through us. Paul holds up a mirror and shows us our lives when we lose focus. This is us when we forget God's love and promises. In this passage, Paul reminds us that we have everything we need in Jesus, no matter what we are experiencing or waiting for right now.



Dear God, help us to wait with hope and trust. Let us hear again about your steadfast love until it makes a permanent home in our hearts. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2020

LIVING GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 64:1-9

Daily Comfort

*Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.*

Isaiah 64:8

Isaiah brings us a prayer and a lament. This is a prayer that speaks of the sin of Israel and a lament that has the people asking for mercy and forgiveness.

Last March, many of us sat needing comfort over COVID-19, the novel coronavirus. On the final Sunday we would meet together before closing the building for in-person services, we heard a wonderful sermon about how we can never be separated from God. Our pastor reminded us of the ways we can remain connected during times of social distancing.

How comforting for the people of Israel and for us today, to know that God created each person with a perfect love and purpose. *We belong to God, and we are one body.*



Dear God, guide us to your loving comfort when we are worried or when we fail. May we live knowing that we all belong to you. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2020

LIVING GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: MARK 13:24–37

Daily Trust

“And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Mark 13:37

Alarms go off throughout our days. Early morning alarms wake us. Sirens and different sounding alarms ring when emergencies occur. We pay attention, and we follow the sounds that make us sit up and listen.

In Mark, we hear a different kind of alarm. We are warned to stay awake and to avoid growing complacent. We are asked to look at where we place our attention and trust. God calls for us to be awake, but not just for the prophetic words that Mark has written. God wants us to be awake now, to see all that is before us. We are to be awake so that we can join in the work with God. The kingdom of God is here *right now*. God wants us to see everything and everyone with our eyes and hearts today!



Dear God, forgive us when we place our trust in those things that will not last. Keep us awake and help us to see and hear as Jesus does. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

LIVING GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 80:1–7

Daily Hope

*Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim,
shine forth.*

Psalm 80:1

Shepherds were important in ancient times. They were vital because they made sure that sheep were taken care of properly. The shepherds protected the sheep, not only from the elements but also from wild animals. In this communal lament, the shepherd is a metaphor for God. God is being implored to change the situation. The cities of Israel were destroyed. In this time of great sadness, the people wanted to be rescued.

You can hear the desperation that begins this psalm. You can hear the little bit of hope too. One way for us to build hope is through prayer. When we pray, we demonstrate our hope in the promise that God hears our corporate and individual prayers. When prayer becomes a regular part of our lives, our own hope is both renewed and strengthened.

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*Dear God, in our boldness and hope, may we pray
knowing that you hear us. Amen.*

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

LIVING GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 17:11–19

Daily Thanks

He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

Luke 17:16

There is so much that I love in this rich passage about the nature of Jesus. What can get lost here is that Jesus heals this leper twice!

First, all ten lepers are healed. Yet, in the last verse, Jesus tells the thankful, returning leper “your faith has made you well” (v. 19). If Jesus healed him with the other nine lepers earlier, why did Jesus need to say he was healed again?

Could it be that the tenth leper received an inner healing too? Sometimes we are healed or our circumstances are changed on the outside. But what this story tells me is that if we stay with Jesus, we will see a deeper relationship develop. Just as this leper experienced, we, too, can receive the fullness of God’s healing powers.

Jesus’ nature includes wanting to heal each of us. His healing is without borders.



Dear God, on this Thanksgiving Day, let our gratitude lead us back to you. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2020

LIVING GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 80:17–19

Daily Peace

*Restore us, O LORD God of Hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.*

Psalm 80:19

The people of Israel are remembering how God took care of them in the past. In this psalm, we can read about the deep sorrow they felt when they were apart from God. They remember God's presence with them in the exodus. They remember receiving the Ten Commandments, which help us all live as God intended for us to live. The repetition of verse 3 in this psalm reflects their sincerity and genuine sadness for their failure to stay close to God.

Like the ancient people before us, we too acknowledge that we need God. We, too, tell God when we have strayed or wandered away. When we do this, we show our trust in God's promise of forgiveness. Our acknowledgment brings us the peace of God.

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, remind us of our past with you, and forgive us when we forget. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

LIVING GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3–9

Daily Love

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you.

1 Corinthians 1:3–4

Paul begins by naming Jesus as Lord, and then he counts his blessings. He gives thanks for the people in Corinth, and his love for them is evident from the start.

Paul does not like what is happening within the church, but his hope and encouragement will help them become better people. Even with the destructive behavior among members, Paul still thanks God for them all!

How often do you and I respond to difficult people in this way? If you are like me, probably not often enough. *How is it that Paul can do this?*

Perhaps Paul's own gratitude enables him to respond with encouragement and love. How wonderful to recognize the power that our personal gratitude carries!



Dear God, as we remember who Jesus is, help us to offer hope and encouragement so that others may become enriched in you. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020

GOD WITH US ALL

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 40:1–11

A God Who Comes

A voice cries out:

*“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our
God.”*

Isaiah 40:3

When I travel by car, I make sure that I have the directions that will lead me on the easiest and safest roads. I prefer traveling more on back roads and less on busy, fast-paced highways. I like a straight, unobstructed path.

The unknown voice that cries out in what is referred to as Second Isaiah uses a metaphor when describing the way of the Lord. This is not so much about physical landscape, but perhaps we see the landscape of the nature of God. God has a way of coming to us, and in this passage, all will have a way to meet God. When Jesus comes, he too has a strong, clear message of inclusion. *God comes to all.*



Dear God, remind us that your love keeps the path to you open and is wide enough for everyone. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey

GOD WITH US ALL

SCRIPTURE: 2 PETER 3:8–15A

A God Who Waits

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

Standing in line at the drug store, I watched as a young mother looked at her phone and sighed. The young child next to her seemed to feel her mother's impatience. A customer at the register was making a return, and the clerk was struggling with the cumbersome process. The fictional Murphy's Law, "anything that can go wrong will go wrong," can seem so real at times—especially when we're in a hurry.

Sometimes it seems that God is moving too slowly in our lives. God's time is not the same as ours. We want something to happen now, but God has something else in mind. *Grace*. When things aren't happening fast enough for us, God is waiting. Within God's waiting, as hard as it is, maybe it is a good time to look for grace. God wants every one of us, so God waits.



Dear God, forgive us when our impatience and rushing block us from seeing your grace in our world. Amen.

Cindy Caporaso, Chatham, New Jersey