

Living Hope

FROM THE EMPTY TOMB TO PENTECOST FIRE

“He has caused us to be born again to a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

1 Peter 1:3

Living Hope: 50 Daily Devotions
From the Empty Tomb to Pentecost Fire

Scripture and Confessional Sources

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Daily Prayers

Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Morning Prayer

In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn, like that of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.

Asking a Blessing

The children and members of the household shall go to the table reverently, fold their hands, and say:

The eyes of all look to You, [O LORD,] and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. (Ps. 145:15–16) Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Evening Prayer

In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.

Welcome to *South Lake Church*

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Welcome to these 50 days between Easter and Pentecost.

Whether you have walked with Jesus for many years, or you are just beginning to explore who He is, I am glad you are here. This is a season filled with hope. Easter reminds us that death does not get the last word. Fear does not get the last word. Sin does not get the last word. Jesus does.

That is the heart of our faith, and it is the heart of this devotion book.

On Good Friday, Jesus went to the cross for us. He took our sin, our shame, our guilt, and our brokenness upon Himself. He did not come merely to give us a few helpful ideas or a fresh start built on our own effort. He came to save us. And on Easter

morning, He rose from the grave in victory. Because of His cross, your sins are forgiven. Because of His resurrection, new life is found in Him. This is not just a comforting church phrase or a seasonal message for springtime. This is the living hope of every Christian, Jesus died for you, Jesus rose for you, and Jesus is with you even now.

That is why this devotion matters.

My prayer is that *Living Hope* will be a steady companion for you in these days after Easter. Not something to rush through, but something to help you slow down and be with Jesus. Some days you may open these pages with joy. Some days you may come tired, distracted, uncertain, or carrying burdens you do not even know how to put into words. That is okay. The risen Lord knows how to meet His people. He is gentle with the weary, faithful to the wandering, and present with those

who are simply trying to take one more step. Let these pages be a guide and an encouragement as you walk with Him from resurrection joy to the promise and power of Pentecost.

I also want this book to help you get to know **South Lake Church** a little better.

At **South Lake**, what we care about most is **relationships with Jesus**. We want people to know Him, trust Him, and follow Him. We want to build disciples of Jesus, not just fill minds with information, but see hearts and lives shaped by His grace. We encourage people to engage in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to grow in relationship with one another, and to share the love of Jesus throughout our community. Faith is personal, yes, but it was never meant to be lonely. In Christ, we are brought into a family.

That means there is a place for you here.

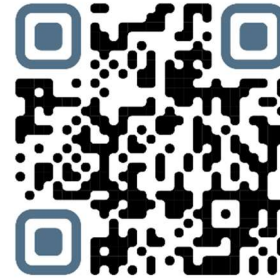
Whether you are a longtime believer, a new believer, a skeptic, a seeker, or someone who simply needs a place to breathe and hear good news, you are welcome at **South Lake Church**. Truly welcome. You do not need to have everything figured out before you come. Most of us are still learning, still growing, still being carried by grace ourselves. The church is not a showroom for polished people. It is a gathering of people who need Jesus, and thanks be to God, He loves meeting people like that.

We gather for worship on **Sundays at 10:30 a.m. at Hometown Heroes Park**, and you can learn more at **southlakelc.org**. We also gather in other ways throughout the week and month, including Peas and Q's, First Tuesdays, Every Wednesday morning breakfast at Kelly's in League City, and

breakfast at Noah's Ark Café Every Saturday. These are simple and meaningful spaces where people connect, ask questions, encourage one another, and keep growing together in faith and friendship.

My hope is that as you spend these days in *Living Hope*, you will not only read about Jesus, but come to know Him more deeply. I pray you will hear again that you are loved, forgiven, and not alone. I pray the joy of Easter will sink deeper into your heart, and that the Spirit of God will keep drawing you closer to Christ.

**Follow Along at
SouthLakeLC.Org/Living-Hope**



May the Lord bless you as you begin this journey. May He strengthen your faith, fill you with His peace, and keep growing you in His love through these 50 days and far beyond. And may the living hope of the risen Jesus carry you, day by day, into a deeper relationship with Him.

Grace and peace,

**Pastor Rob Bailey
South Lake Church
SouthLakeLC.org**

Why Easter Is So Special

Easter is not just one bright Sunday with lilies, brass, and enough alleluias to rattle the ceiling tiles. Easter is a season, a holy stretch of fifty days in which the Church lingers in the victory of Jesus Christ.

That matters, because the resurrection is not a side note to the Christian faith. It is the beating heart of it. If Jesus only died, we would still be left wondering whether death had the final word. But Jesus rose. Bodily. Truly. Historically. Gloriously. The crucified Lord lives, and because He lives, sin is forgiven, death is defeated, and hope is no longer wishful thinking, it is anchored in a Person, Jesus Christ our risen Lord (1 Corinthians 15:17–20; 1 Peter 1:3).

That is why the Church makes such a big, joyful deal out of Easter. We are not celebrating an inspiring idea. We are celebrating a living Savior.

The forty days after Easter are especially precious because they show us that the resurrection was real, not imagined, not symbolic, not the disciples trying to turn heartbreak into a motivational speech. Jesus appeared to His followers over forty days, speaking about the kingdom of God, showing Himself alive, opening the Scriptures, eating with them, and strengthening them for what was ahead (Acts 1:3; Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–29). The risen Jesus met fearful disciples behind locked doors. He met doubting Thomas in his questions. He met Peter in his failure and restored him. That means the resurrection is sturdy enough for scared people, doubters, grievors, and screwups too. Which is excellent news, because that covers rather a lot of us.

Those forty days also remind the Church that Jesus did not rise and then vanish like a magician finishing a trick. He stayed with His disciples, taught them, prepared them, and turned their confusion into conviction. The same Jesus who conquered death also patiently formed His people. He still does.

Then comes Pentecost, and Pentecost is not an unrelated church party tacked onto the end of Easter like an extra scoop nobody ordered. It is the fulfillment of the risen Christ's promise. After His ascension, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on His Church, just as He said He would (Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1–4, 32–39).

Pentecost is the public eruption of resurrection life into the world. The frightened disciples become bold witnesses. Peter, who once trembled and denied Jesus, now stands up and proclaims Him. The gospel begins

going out to the nations with clarity, courage, and joy.

So what does that mean for the Church?

It means the Church is not a nostalgia club preserving memories of a dead teacher. The Church is the gathering of people who belong to the risen Jesus and are filled, called, and sent by His Spirit. We gather because Christ is alive. We preach because Christ is alive. We baptize because Christ is alive. We receive His gifts because Christ is alive. We go into the world with mercy, courage, and witness because Christ is alive. Easter gives the Church its joy, and Pentecost gives the Church its voice.

And what does that mean for you as a believer?

It means first that your faith rests on what Christ has done, not on your spiritual performance. Jesus died for

your sins and rose for your justification (Romans 4:25). You do not have to manufacture hope out of thin air. Hope has been given to you in the gospel.

It also means you are not walking alone. The risen Jesus is with His people, and the Holy Spirit is at work in you through the Word, through baptism, through the promises of God, and through the life of the Church. When your faith feels weak, Easter says Christ is still risen. When your heart feels tired, Pentecost says the Spirit still helps, still comforts, still strengthens.

And it means your life now has direction. Resurrection hope does not make you drift up into the clouds. It sends you into daily life with courage. You can repent honestly, forgive freely, suffer hopefully, pray boldly, serve gladly, and speak of Jesus with humble confidence. The same Lord

who walked out of the tomb now calls you His own.

So the Easter season is special because it teaches us to live in the long sunlight of the resurrection. And Pentecost is special because it shows that the risen Jesus does not only save His people, He sends them.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. And because He lives, His Church lives too.

Living Hope: 50 Daily Devotions

From the Empty Tomb to Pentecost Fire

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again
to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from
the dead.*

1 Peter 1:3

Sunday Reflections

Time to Rest, Remember, and Be with Jesus

Looking Back on the Week

What has the Lord been showing me?

Notes & Reflections



Prayers & Thoughts for the Week Ahead

What am I bringing to Jesus this week?

- *Hopes & Concerns*

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Scriptures on My Heart*

- _____
- _____
- _____

People I'm Praying For

Who is on my heart this week?

- *Family & Friends*

- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Others in Need*

- _____
- _____
- _____



Easter Sunday

Day 1: Before the Sun Was Up

Scripture

John 20:1–10

“Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.” (John 20:8, ESV)

Devotion

The stone was already moved before anyone had found steady footing. That is how resurrection often arrives. Christ is alive before hearts are calm, before thoughts are clear, before grief has caught its breath.

John tells the story at a run. Mary sees the stone moved. Peter runs. The other disciple runs. They bend low, look in, and try to make sense of linen cloths lying still in a place that should have held death. The empty tomb does not answer every question in that moment. It does something stranger. It plants faith in the middle of shock.

That is the heartbeat of this first week. Jesus is risen before people are ready. Fear meets facts, then faith. Peter is still processing. The other disciple sees and believes. Neither man stands at the tomb with polished confidence. The resurrection does not wait for perfect emotional readiness. Christ steps into human panic and begins to turn it toward hope.

The Sunday anchor shows Peter running hard toward mystery. The empty tomb is not a symbol of wishful thinking. It is the place where death lost its hold on Jesus. Because He lives, living hope begins even while the heart still races.

A next step today could be to name one fear plainly before the risen Christ and then place beside it one fact from this text: the tomb is empty, and Jesus is alive.

*What word or
phrase keeps
echoing in my
mind?*

Prayer

Lord Jesus, meet every racing heart with the quiet strength of Your resurrection. Give the reader courage to face fear honestly and to see that death did not keep You. Turn panic into prayer, confusion into trust, and shock into living hope. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader find steady hope in the Christ who was risen before dawn had fully broken.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be gathered into the peace that flows from the empty tomb.

Day 2: Safe in the Dark

Scripture

Psalm 16

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.” (Psalm 16:10, ESV)

Devotion

Some promises sound brightest underground. Psalm 16 speaks from a place that knows danger, but it does not end there. David looks beyond the grave and sings of a God who does not abandon His own to decay.

In its first setting, the psalm is full of trust. God is refuge, portion, counselor, and steady ground. Yet verse 10 stretches farther than David’s own life. It points ahead to the Holy One who would enter death without being owned by it. The empty tomb in John 20 is the answer to the promise

in Psalm 16. God did not abandon His Holy One. Christ rose.

That matters for hearts still racing after Easter morning. Week 1 carries this theme: fear meets facts, then faith.

Psalm 16 adds depth to those facts.

The resurrection was not a last-second rescue plan. It was the faithful keeping of God’s ancient word. The God who watched over His Son through death is the same God who holds His people when the ground feels loose.

The risen Jesus gives more than relief from a bad week. He gives a future that cannot rot. In Him, the path of life is opened. In Him, death is no longer a locked room but a broken gate.

A next step today could be to read Psalm 16 slowly and circle every phrase that names God as refuge, then hold one of those phrases through the day like a nail driven into solid wood.

Prayer

Faithful God, thank You for keeping every promise in Christ. Give the reader rest in the dark places and confidence that no grave is deeper than Your mercy. Fasten this resurrection hope into the heart and keep it there. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be held by the God who does not abandon His own.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader carries in prayer be strengthened by the promise of life beyond decay.

*What fear do I
need to confess
today?*

Day 3: The Feast After the Funeral

Scripture

Isaiah 25:6–9

“He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.” (Isaiah 25:8, ESV)

Devotion

Isaiah sets a table where sorrow once sat. The prophet sees a mountain, a feast, and a God who does not merely manage grief but destroys its source. Death itself is swallowed up.

That is not sentimental language. It is battle language. Death is the great devourer, and in this promise God turns the tables. The destroyer is destroyed. The shroud spread over all nations is removed. Tears are not ignored. They are wiped away by the hand of God Himself.

Week 1 begins with an empty tomb and stunned disciples. Isaiah shows what the empty tomb means. Jesus is risen before people are ready, and His resurrection is the first crack in death’s old kingdom. The Sunday anchor in John 20 gives the evidence. Isaiah 25 gives the horizon. The women and disciples are not simply learning that one beloved teacher survived. They are standing at the opening of the end of death.

Living hope is not a thin smile pasted over pain. It is God’s promise with muscle and bone. It is the certainty that in Christ, the funeral dirge will not have the final word. The church lives between the empty tomb and the full feast, already tasting what is still coming.

A next step today could be to bring one grief into the open before God and answer it with Isaiah's promise: the Lord will swallow up death forever.

Prayer

Lord God, set this strong promise deep in the reader's heart. Where grief is fresh, bring comfort. Where fear of death lingers, bring Christ's victory to mind. Keep Your people looking toward the feast that the risen Jesus has secured. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be steadied by the God who wipes away tears and defeats death.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves taste even now the comfort of the coming feast of God.

*What am I
thankful for
today?*

Day 4: The Prayer from the Belly

Scripture

Jonah 2

“Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.” (Jonah 2:2, ESV)

Devotion

Jonah prays from a place where no prayer should still be rising. Wrapped in seaweed, sunk beneath waves, locked inside the fish, he speaks as one already buried. Yet the voice of faith reaches up from the deep.

Jonah 2 is full of descent. Down into the sea. Down to the roots of the mountains. Down into what he calls Sheol. But every downward line is matched by a greater truth: the Lord hears. Jonah cannot climb back to God. God reaches down and brings his life up from the pit.

That pattern points toward Christ. Week 1 keeps returning to the shock of resurrection. Fear meets facts, then faith. Jonah’s prayer is a signpost toward the greater descent and greater deliverance of Jesus. Christ entered the deep fully, not because of His rebellion, but because of human sin. Then on Easter morning He rose, leaving the grave as empty as Jonah left the fish.

John 20 shows the disciples staring into linen cloths and trying to understand. Jonah 2 teaches that God has always been the Lord of impossible depths. No grave is too sealed. No darkness too thick. The risen Christ is proof that the Lord still brings life out of places that smell like the end.

A next step today could be to pray one honest sentence from a deep place, trusting that the God who heard Jonah has not lost His hearing.

Prayer

Merciful Lord, hear the cries that rise from deep waters. Give the reader confidence that no pit is hidden from Your sight. Through the risen Christ, bring life where despair has settled and hope where silence has grown heavy. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader discover that the Lord still hears from the deepest place.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader carries through dark waters be met by the God who brings life up from the pit.

*Who am I
praying for
today?*

Day 5: Firelight on the Road

Scripture

Luke 24:13–35

“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32, ESV)

Devotion

The risen Jesus sometimes walks beside sorrow without being recognized at first. Two disciples leave Jerusalem with slow feet and heavy hearts. They have facts, but not yet understanding. They have reports, but not yet joy.

Jesus joins them on the road and asks questions that draw their pain into the open. Then He opens Moses and the Prophets and shows that suffering and glory belong together in the Messiah. At the table, in the breaking of bread, their eyes open. The stranger is the Lord.

This fits Week 1 exactly. Jesus is risen before people are ready. Fear meets facts, then faith. The disciples on the road are not hostile to hope; they are simply buried under disappointment. John 20 gave the empty tomb. Luke 24 adds the living voice of Christ interpreting everything through Himself. Resurrection is not random surprise. It is the fulfillment of God’s story.

Notice how Jesus deals with confusion. He does not shame these disciples into speed. He walks, speaks, opens Scripture, and makes their hearts burn before their eyes fully clear. That is living hope at work. The risen Christ does not only leave a vacant tomb behind. He comes near and makes sense of shattered expectations.

A next step today could be to read one Gospel story slowly and ask Christ to open the Scriptures until the heart grows warm with His presence.

Prayer

Risen Lord Jesus, walk beside the reader in every disappointed place. Open the Scriptures with clarity and set the heart on fire with truth. In places where grief has narrowed vision, reveal Your living presence again. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be met on the road by the Christ who turns confusion into burning hope.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be surprised by the nearness of Jesus in their own weary journeys.

Day 6: First Importance

Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

“That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day.” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, ESV)

Devotion

Some truths are not decorative. They are load-bearing. Paul calls the death and resurrection of Christ matters of first importance because everything else hangs on them.

He gives the Gospel in firm lines. Christ died for sins. Christ was buried. Christ was raised. Christ appeared. This is not a private feeling or a clever spiritual idea. It is news rooted in history and promised in Scripture. The resurrection stands on witness, not wishful thinking.

That sharpens the theme of Week 1. Fear meets facts, then faith. John 20 showed Peter running and stooping and staring into the evidence. First Corinthians 15 gathers those facts into a clear confession. Easter is not merely the end of sadness. It is the victory of Christ over sin and death for the sake of sinners.

Paul includes himself among the witnesses, and even calls himself unworthy. That detail matters. The risen Jesus does not belong only to the strong and stable. He appears to doubters, deniers, grieving women, confused disciples, and even a former persecutor. Grace does not wait for a polished record. It meets people where they are and gives them a new future.

Living hope rests here: Christ died for sins and rose again. Therefore guilt does not rule, death does not reign, and the church has something solid to stand on.

A next step today could be to speak this Gospel aloud in one sentence: Christ died for sins and rose again, and that changes everything.

Prayer

God of all grace, ground the reader in what is of first importance. Keep the heart from drifting into lesser hopes. Let the death and resurrection of Jesus stand at the center, steadying faith and strengthening joy. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader stand today on the solid ground of Christ crucified and risen.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be drawn into the freedom and peace of this Gospel news.

*What part of
today's reading
challenged me
most?*

Day 7: Skin and Dust and Sight

Scripture

Job 19:23–27

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25, ESV)

Devotion

Job says one of the strongest resurrection sentences in all of Scripture while sitting in misery. His body is failing, his losses are crushing, and his friends are poor comfort. Yet out of the ash heap comes this defiant confession: his Redeemer lives.

That line does not rise from pleasant circumstances. It rises in protest against despair. Job looks past ruined skin and fresh grief toward a living Redeemer who will stand at the last. Even death will not cancel that meeting. Job expects to see God.

Week 1 has been filled with running feet, empty grave cloths, and startled hearts. John 20 showed the first disciples beginning to believe through the fact of the empty tomb. Job adds ancient thunder to Easter faith. Long before the women came to the garden, the people of God were being taught to look for One who lives and will stand victorious in the end.

In Christ, Job’s hope receives a name and a face. The Redeemer is not a vague wish. He is Jesus, crucified and risen. Because He lives, the body matters. Because He lives, dust is not final. Because He lives, sorrow does not get to rename reality.

Living hope can sound fragile in the mouth, but it is stronger than the grave beneath the feet. The Christian confession is not that pain is small. It is that the Redeemer is alive.

A next step today could be to repeat Job 19:25 several times through the day, especially in moments when loss feels loud.

Prayer

Living Redeemer, anchor the reader in this holy defiance. Where grief presses hard, let resurrection hope press harder. Keep the eyes of faith fixed on the day when Christ will stand upon the earth and make all things new. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be strengthened by the living Redeemer who will not abandon dust to the grave.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be comforted with the promise that Christ lives and will stand at the last.

*Who am I
praying for
today?*

Sunday Reflections

Time to Rest, Remember, and Be with Jesus

Looking Back on the Week

What has the Lord been showing me?

Notes & Reflections



Prayers & Thoughts for the Week Ahead

What am I bringing to Jesus this week?

- *Hopes & Concerns*

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Scriptures on My Heart*

- _____
- _____
- _____

People I'm Praying For

Who is on my heart this week?

- *Family & Friends*

- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Others in Need*

- _____
- _____
- _____



2nd Sunday of Easter

Day 8: Guarded Hope

Scripture

1 Peter 1:1–12

“According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Peter 1:3, ESV)

Devotion

Peter writes to scattered believers and starts not with commands, but with mercy. Before he tells them how to live, he tells them who they are. They are born again into a living hope.

That hope is not floating free in the air. It is tied to the resurrection of Jesus and secured by an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Better still, the heirs themselves are being guarded by God’s power. Identity comes before activity. Grace speaks before effort begins.

That is the pulse of Week 2: identity before activity; inheritance guarded by God. The Sunday anchor sets the whole tone. Exiles are not forgotten people. They are chosen people. Their lives may feel unstable in the world, but their future is kept in heaven and their faith is kept by God.

Peter does not deny grief. He speaks honestly about trials. But hope is not denial. It is God’s promise with a backbone. The risen Christ has opened a future that suffering cannot erase. Even unseen, He is loved. Even hidden, He is holding His own.

Living hope makes it possible to endure the present without being defined by it. A Christian may be scattered, bruised, or weary, but never ownerless. Resurrection has given a new birth and a lasting home.

A next step today could be to write down three identity words from this passage—chosen, born again, guarded—and return to them whenever anxiety tries to speak louder.

Prayer

Father of mercy, root the reader in the new birth given through Christ's resurrection. Guard faith in every trial and keep hope bright with the promise of an inheritance that cannot fade. Let identity in Christ stand stronger than every shifting circumstance. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader rest in the mercy that has given a living hope.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be guarded by God's power and gladdened by Christ's resurrection.

Day 9: Leaving with a Promise

Scripture

Genesis 12:1–9

“So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.” (Genesis 12:4, ESV)

Devotion

A life can turn on a single sentence from God. Abram is called to leave land, relatives, and familiar ground for a place not yet shown. He moves not because he has a map, but because he has a promise.

Genesis 12 is the beginning of a pilgrim life. God speaks blessing over Abram and declares that through him all the families of the earth will be blessed. The promise is bigger than one man. It reaches toward Christ, the true Seed through whom blessing comes to the nations.

Week 2 teaches identity before activity. Abram’s journey starts there. He does not create the promise by walking. He walks because the promise has already been given. The same order holds for the church. First Peter calls believers elect exiles with an inheritance guarded by God. Genesis shows what such exile-life looks like in seed form: trusting God enough to move while still waiting to see.

Living hope does not require visible certainty. It rests in the character of the One who calls. Abram builds altars as he goes, marking the road with worship because the Lord has attached Himself to the journey. The Christian life does the same. It travels through unsettled places while leaning on the settled word of God.

A next step today could be to name one uncertain area of life and place over it this simple confession: the Lord's promise is stronger than the lack of a map.

Prayer

Lord of the promise, strengthen the reader to walk by faith and not by sight. In every unsettled place, keep Christ's blessing in view and let the heart rest in the word that calls, leads, and keeps. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader walk with quiet courage under the promise of God.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves find blessing and direction in the Lord who still calls people forward by His word.

*What part of
today's reading
challenged me
most?*

Day 10: City with a River

Scripture

Psalm 46

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

(Psalm 46:1, ESV)

Devotion

Psalm 46 does not begin by shrinking trouble. It begins by enlarging God. Mountains move, waters roar, kingdoms totter, but the first word over all the noise is refuge.

This psalm pictures creation coming loose at the joints. Seas foam. Earth gives way. Nations rage. Yet in the middle of that shaking stands the city of God, glad with the quiet river of His presence. The stability of that city does not come from strong walls but from the Lord in its midst.

Week 2 speaks to exiles, people who know what it is to live unsettled. First Peter grounds them in identity before activity and in an inheritance guarded by God. Psalm 46 gives the emotional texture of that same truth. Safety does not come from easy circumstances. It comes from the God who is near in trouble.

That nearness is fulfilled in Christ. The risen Jesus is not a distant memory for troubled people. He is present help. Because of His resurrection, living hope does not collapse when the landscape shakes. The inheritance is still kept. The people are still guarded. The city of God still stands.

The line “Be still, and know that I am God” is not a soft whisper for a calm afternoon. It is a royal command spoken over chaos. The Lord silences panic by revealing Himself.

A next step today could be to pause three times during the day, breathe slowly, and pray Psalm 46:1 as a brief act of trust.

Prayer

Mighty God, be refuge and strength for the reader in every place of trouble. Calm the inner noise with the promise of Your nearness. Through the risen Christ, keep the heart anchored when everything else seems to sway. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be steadied by the God who is very present in trouble.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be sheltered beneath the strong mercy of the Lord.

*What burden do
I need to hand
over to the Lord
today?*

Day 11: Gardens in Exile

Scripture

Jeremiah 29:4–14

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11, ESV)

Devotion

Jeremiah writes not to people escaping exile, but to people settling into it. The Lord tells them to build houses, plant gardens, marry, pray for the city, and wait. The promise of hope does not cancel the long middle. It gives meaning inside it.

That matters because hope is often mistaken for instant rescue. In this passage, God promises a future, but He also names seventy years. His people are not abandoned in Babylon, yet neither are they rushed out of it.

Their calling is to live faithfully where they are while trusting the God who will bring them home.

Week 2 teaches that identity comes before activity. First Peter calls Christians exiles whose inheritance is guarded by God. Jeremiah shows how such exiles live. They are not rootless. They plant. They pray. They seek the welfare of the place where God has stationed them. Their identity is secure, so their presence can become fruitful.

The larger promise moves toward Christ. In Him, hope grows sturdy enough to endure long seasons. Resurrection does not make the present painless, but it does make the future certain. The God who raised Jesus has not forgotten His people in the waiting.

A next step today could be to pray for the good of one specific place—a neighborhood, workplace, classroom, or city—while remembering that exile and usefulness can exist side by side.

Prayer

Faithful Lord, keep the reader from despair in the long middle. Give patience for waiting, faithfulness in ordinary callings, and confidence that Your future is secure in Christ. Let hope grow roots even in hard soil. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader find strong hope in the God who works even through long seasons of exile.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves become signs of God's peace wherever He has planted them.

*Who needs
encouragement
from me today?*

Day 12: Brought Near

Scripture

Ephesians 2:11–22

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

(Ephesians 2:13, ESV)

Devotion

Distance can become an identity. Paul writes to Gentiles who once lived outside the covenants, outside the commonwealth, outside hope. They were far off in every way that mattered. Then comes one of Scripture’s sweetest turns: but now in Christ Jesus.

Christ does not merely improve the distance. He removes it. By His blood He brings the far off near, tears down the dividing wall, and creates one new humanity in place of hostility. Peace is not a mood here. It is a Person. Jesus Himself is our peace.

Week 2 centers on identity before activity and on an inheritance guarded by God. Ephesians 2 shows how that identity is given. It is not earned by climbing inward or outward. It is received through the reconciling work of Christ. First Peter speaks of exiles who belong to God; Ephesians adds that these once-strangers are now fellow citizens and members of God’s household.

Even more, the church is being built into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Exiles are not merely tolerated at the edge of the kingdom. They are brought inside and built together. Living hope is communal. Christ gathers scattered people and makes them home for one another because He has first made peace with God through the cross.

A next step today could be to remember one person who feels far off and pray that Christ would draw that life near by His reconciling mercy.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for bringing the far off near by Your blood. Give the reader deep assurance of belonging and a heart shaped by Your peace. Build Your people together into a dwelling place filled with grace and truth. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader live today in the nearness Christ has purchased.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be gathered into the peace and household of God.

Day 13: Looking for a Better Country

Scripture

Hebrews 11:8–16

**“But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.”
(Hebrews 11:16, ESV)**

Devotion

Faith often lives in tents. Hebrews remembers Abraham and Sarah as people who obeyed, journeyed, and waited without receiving the fullness of what had been promised in their lifetime. They lived between promise given and promise completed.

That in-between life was not failure. It was faith. They saw the promises from afar and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. Yet their exile was full of direction. They were not wandering nowhere. They were headed toward a better country prepared by God.

Week 2 keeps pressing this truth: identity before activity; inheritance guarded by God. First Peter names the church as elect exiles. Hebrews shows what such exile-life looks like over time. God’s people may dwell in temporary structures, but their future is not temporary. Their homeland is held by the God who is not ashamed to be called their God.

Christ is the center of this hope. Because He rose from the dead, the better country is not fantasy. It is secured reality. The inheritance is not fading on the shelf. It is kept in heaven, and the heirs are kept for it. That makes ordinary faithfulness meaningful even in unfinished circumstances.

A next step today could be to hold one earthly disappointment beside this promise and remember that not every holy longing is meant to be completed on this side of resurrection.

Prayer

God of Abraham, keep the reader walking by faith through every unfinished chapter. Lift the eyes toward the better country secured in Christ, and let that promised homeland strengthen endurance in the present. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader travel lightly, with the heart set on the better country God has prepared.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be given courage to trust God in the long road of waiting.

Day 14: Robes Washed White

Scripture

Revelation 7:9–17

“For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water.” (Revelation 7:17, ESV)

Devotion

Revelation opens the curtain and shows where exile ends. A great multitude stands before the throne, not small, not hidden, not scattered anymore. Every nation, tribe, people, and language is there, clothed in white and crying out that salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb.

The image is startling. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and the Lamb is also Shepherd. The One who was slain now leads. The One who shed His blood is the reason the robes are white. Grace has carried this multitude all the way home.

Week 2 has taught that identity comes before activity and that inheritance is guarded by God. Revelation 7 shows the end of that promise. First Peter speaks of an inheritance kept in heaven. Here it is, blazing into view. The exiles are safe at last. Hunger is gone. scorching heat is gone. Tears are wiped away. The Shepherd has not lost one of His own.

Living hope needs this vision. The present can feel scattered and thin, but Christ's resurrection has already fixed the ending. The church is moving toward a throne, a Shepherd, and living water. The inheritance is not an idea. It is a world made new by the victory of the Lamb.

A next step today could be to pray for the church across the nations, remembering that every faithful congregation is part of the same coming multitude before the throne.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Shepherd and Lamb, keep the reader's eyes lifted toward the day when all Your people will stand before Your throne in joy. Strengthen hope with this holy vision and lead Your church by the springs of living water. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be comforted by the Shepherd who is leading all the way home.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be kept in the white-robed mercy of the Lamb.

Sunday Reflections

Time to Rest, Remember, and Be with Jesus

Looking Back on the Week

What has the Lord been showing me?

Notes & Reflections



Prayers & Thoughts for the Week Ahead

What am I bringing to Jesus this week?

- *Hopes & Concerns*

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Scriptures on My Heart*

- _____
- _____
- _____

People I'm Praying For

Who is on my heart this week?

- *Family & Friends*

- _____
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- _____

- *Others in Need*

- _____
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3rd Sunday of Easter

Day 15: Hope with Sleeves Rolled Up

Scripture

1 Peter 1:13–25

“As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” (1 Peter 1:15, ESV)

Devotion

Grace does not leave a life in neutral. Peter begins with hope fully set on the grace to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ, then he speaks of holiness. The order matters. Grace comes first. Holiness follows.

Week 3 turns on this truth: holiness as belonging, not performance. Peter does not tell believers to invent a new identity by effort. He tells those already called by God to live in a way that fits their Father’s house.

Obedience grows out of adoption.

The image in verse 13 is active and vivid: “preparing” the mind, like gathering loose clothing for movement. Resurrection hope does not make people passive. It makes them ready. The old patterns of ignorance no longer fit because Christ has claimed His people at a great cost—the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

The Sunday anchor keeps Christ at the center. Holiness is not a ladder to climb toward acceptance. It is the shape life begins to take when grace has already named a person beloved and redeemed. The imperishable word has caused a new birth. Therefore conduct changes, not as theater, but as fruit.

A next step today could be to ask where a past pattern no longer fits the identity Christ has given, and then take one concrete act of repentance shaped by that belonging.

Prayer

Holy Father, through the grace revealed in Jesus, form the reader into a life that reflects true belonging. Let hope in Christ steady the mind, cleanse the heart, and shape daily conduct with humble, living holiness. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader walk in the holy freedom of one already redeemed by Christ.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be formed by grace into lives that shine with belonging to God.

Day 16: Holy in the Neighborhood

Scripture

Leviticus 19:1–18

“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2, ESV)

Devotion

Leviticus can sound distant until its holiness starts landing on ordinary ground. Reverence for parents. Honest business. Care for the poor. Truthful speech. Just judgments. Love for the neighbor. Holiness shows up in the neighborhood.

God’s command, “You shall be holy,” is not detached from His own character. His people are to bear His likeness in the everyday patterns of life. Yet even here, holiness is not performance art. It is covenant belonging expressed in concrete love.

That fits the pulse of Week 3: holiness as belonging, not performance. First Peter draws on this very line from Leviticus when calling believers to be holy. The point is not to invent a spotless self by effort. The point is to live as people who belong to the Holy One. Grace does not only forgive; it also forms.

Leviticus 19 makes that formation practical. Holiness is not a private glow. It touches wallets, words, work, judgments, and neighbor-love. The chapter rises to its peak in verse 18: “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In Christ, that command is not lessened but deepened. The One who shed His blood for sinners now shapes His redeemed people into lives of truthful, merciful love.

A next step today could be to choose one ordinary relationship and practice holiness there through honesty, patience, or practical generosity.

Prayer

Holy Lord, let the reader's belonging to You be seen in daily life. Guard from empty performance and form a quiet, sturdy holiness marked by truth, mercy, and love for the neighbor through Christ. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader discover holiness growing in the ordinary places of the day.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be served by the simple, faithful love that God brings to life.

Who am I
praying for
today?

Day 17: Nearer Than Expected

Scripture

Deuteronomy 30:11–20

“But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.” (Deuteronomy 30:14, ESV)

Devotion

God does not hide His will in a distant cloud. Moses tells Israel that the commandment is not too hard, not far away, not beyond the sea. The word is near.

That nearness matters because the human heart often imagines holiness as something reserved for unreachable saints or heroic moments.

Deuteronomy pulls holiness into hearing range. God speaks plainly. He sets before His people life and death, blessing and curse, and calls them to choose life by loving Him and walking in His ways.

Week 3 teaches holiness as belonging, not performance. This passage fits because God’s word comes near before obedience begins. The command is not a puzzle to solve in order to earn identity. It is a gift given to a covenant people already claimed by the Lord. Peter says grace forms. Deuteronomy shows one of grace’s tools: the word that comes close enough to be spoken and obeyed.

In the wider story, Christ is the true nearness of God's word. He is not far off. He comes in flesh, speaks life, dies for sinners, and rises again. Holiness, then, is not reaching up to a remote God. It is answering the voice of the God who has come near.

A next step today could be to take one clear command from Scripture already known and obey it in a simple, immediate way rather than waiting for a more dramatic assignment.

Prayer

Lord God, thank You for bringing Your word near. Give the reader a listening heart and an obedient spirit shaped by grace. Through Christ, let the nearness of Your voice produce the fruit of life and peace. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be guided by the near and living word of God.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves hear God's voice clearly and walk in His life-giving ways.

Day 18: Hidden in the Heart

Scripture

Psalm 119:9–16

“I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:11, ESV)

Devotion

A heart never stays empty. It fills with noise, memory, craving, fear, or truth. Psalm 119 shows the better filling: God’s word hidden in the inner life like seed stored in good soil.

The psalmist asks how a young man can keep his way pure, then answers not with technique but with attention to God’s word. Seeking, treasuring, delighting, meditating, speaking—these are the verbs of a life being formed. Holiness grows where truth is welcomed deeply.

That is the spirit of Week 3. Holiness is belonging, not performance. First Peter roots holy living in grace and redemption. Psalm 119 shows how that grace continues its shaping work. God’s word is not merely information to admire. It is nourishment, correction, and delight. Stored in the heart, it begins to bend desires and choices toward the Lord.

Christ stands at the center even here. He is the living Word who fulfilled holiness perfectly and now gives His people the Scriptures that testify to Him. The goal is not self-improvement dressed in Bible language. The goal is a life steadily formed by the truth of the Redeemer.

Small disciplines matter because small openings let light in. A few verses carried honestly can do quiet, lasting work in a soul.

A next step today could be to memorize one short verse from the day's reading and return to it whenever the mind drifts toward temptation or discouragement.

Prayer

Lord, plant Your word deep in the reader's heart. Give delight in Scripture, patience in meditation, and strength to resist what dishonors You. Through Christ, let truth shape the inner life into something clean and alive. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be guarded by the word of God treasured in the heart.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be nourished and steadied by the Scriptures of Christ.

*What part of
today's reading
challenged me
most?*

Day 19: An Altar Made of Mercy

Scripture

Romans 12:1–2

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1, ESV)

Devotion

Romans 12 begins with a therefore, and that word carries a mountain behind it. All the mercies of God in Christ lead into this call: present the body, the actual life, as a living sacrifice.

This is not a bargain with God. Paul does not say, “Offer enough, and mercy may follow.” Mercy is the reason for the offering. That is why Week 3 matters so much: holiness as belonging, not performance. Grace does not simply pardon the old life and walk away. It claims the whole person and begins reshaping thought, desire, and action.

The command not to be conformed to this world assumes pressure. Every age has molds ready to press people into shape. But the Christian life is not meant to fit those molds. It is transformed by the renewing of the mind. That renewal comes through the Gospel, through the risen Christ, and through the Spirit who teaches the church to discern what is good.

A living sacrifice sounds strange because sacrifices usually die. But resurrection changes the image. In Christ, a holy life is not dead effort laid on an altar. It is living worship animated by mercy. Bodies, minds, schedules, relationships, and habits all become places where grace starts showing its work.

A next step today could be to offer one ordinary part of the day—work, rest, speech, or service—to God as an intentional act of worship shaped by His mercy.

Prayer

Merciful God, renew the reader's mind by the truth of Christ. Receive this day's ordinary labors as living worship and keep grace at the center, so holiness grows from belonging and not from fear. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader live today as a grateful offering shaped by the mercies of God.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be blessed by a life quietly transformed through Christ.

Day 20: Salt and Morning Light

Scripture

Matthew 5:1–16

“You are the light of the world.”
(Matthew 5:14, ESV)

Devotion

Jesus does not tell His disciples to become salt and light by impressive effort. He tells them what they are because they belong to Him. Identity comes first, then witness. That makes the Sermon on the Mount far less theatrical and far more searching.

The Beatitudes begin with empty-handed people receiving blessing: the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the persecuted. This is Christ’s kingdom portrait. Then Jesus says that such people are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Holiness is visible, but it is not self-advertising. Light shines because it cannot help shining.

Week 3 teaches holiness as belonging, not performance. Matthew 5 fits beautifully. Jesus forms a people whose lives carry the taste and brightness of another kingdom. Not because they are staging righteousness, but because grace is making them into something new.

The Sunday anchor in 1 Peter speaks of redemption by Christ's blood and a call to holiness. Matthew shows the public shape that holiness can take: humble mercy, peacemaking, endurance, and good works that point beyond the self to the Father. Christ remains the center, because only the One who fulfills this sermon can create such life in His people.

A next step today could be to do one quiet good work without drawing attention to it, letting the light fall on the Father rather than on the self.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, make the reader's life bright with the humble light of Your kingdom. Guard from performance and let holiness take the form of mercy, truth, and quiet good works that honor the Father. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader shine with a gentle, Christ-shaped brightness in the world.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be warmed and guided by the light of Christ reflected in faithful lives.

Day 21: Grace with Hands

Scripture

Titus 2:11–14

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us.” (Titus 2:11–12, ESV)

Devotion

Grace is not lazy. Paul says grace has appeared, and then he gives grace an active verb: training. The saving kindness of God in Christ does not merely forgive what was. It forms what is becoming.

That is the devotional pulse of Week 3 in a sentence: grace does not only forgive, it also forms. Titus says the same thing with strong simplicity. Grace trains God’s people to renounce ungodliness and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives while waiting for the appearing of the glory of Jesus Christ.

Notice again the order. Salvation comes first. Christ gave Himself to redeem and purify a people for His own possession. Belonging comes before behavior. Holiness is not performance aimed at purchase. It is the fruit of being claimed by the crucified and risen Savior.

This makes holiness both humbling and hopeful. Humbling, because it cannot be credited to native virtue. Hopeful, because grace is still at work. The same Lord who gave Himself for sinners now trains them patiently. He is not producing polished actors. He is shaping a people zealous for good works because they know whose they are.

A next step today could be to ask where grace may be training patience, restraint, or courage in an ordinary struggle, then receive that struggle as a classroom rather than only as an interruption.

Prayer

God of saving grace, continue the holy work of training the reader through Christ. Give strength to renounce what is false and joy in what is good. Let belonging to Jesus shape a life that is ready for His appearing. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be patiently formed by the grace that has already appeared in Christ.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be strengthened by grace to live with hope, purity, and courage.

Sunday Reflections

Time to Rest, Remember, and Be with Jesus

Looking Back on the Week

What has the Lord been showing me?

Notes & Reflections



Prayers & Thoughts for the Week Ahead

What am I bringing to Jesus this week?

- *Hopes & Concerns*

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- _____

- *Scriptures on My Heart*

- _____
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People I'm Praying For

Who is on my heart this week?

- *Family & Friends*

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- *Others in Need*

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4th Sunday of Easter

Day 22: Steps in His Tracks

Scripture

1 Peter 2:13–25

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”
(1 Peter 2:21, ESV)

Devotion

Peter speaks into a hard world without baptizing cruelty. He calls believers to endure unjust suffering, but he does not call evil good. Instead, he fixes the eyes on Christ, who suffered without deceit, without revenge, and without surrendering Himself to the injustice done against Him.

Week 4 needs that center. Submission texts can be misused. Peter will not let endurance be confused with control or shame. The pattern is Christ Himself. He did not retaliate. He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. Endurance is not weakness. It is faith refusing to let go.

The Sunday anchor ties suffering directly to the cross. Jesus bore sins in His body on the tree, that sinners might die to sin and live to righteousness. This means His example is never separated from His saving work. He is not merely a brave model to copy. He is the Shepherd and Overseer who carried wandering sheep home through His wounds.

That changes how endurance is understood. Christian suffering is not noble because pain has become holy on its own. It is meaningful because Christ has walked into suffering, redeemed His people there, and now leads them without shame.

A next step today could be to entrust one unjust or painful situation to the God who judges justly, refusing both retaliation and despair.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, keep the reader close to Your cross in every season of pressure. Give courage without bitterness, patience without surrender to evil, and deep trust in the Father who judges justly. Shepherd every wounded heart back to Your peace. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader follow in the steps of Christ with quiet strength and clean hope.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be kept from shame and steadied by the suffering Savior.

Day 23: Fire That Did Not Own Them

Scripture

Daniel 3

“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.” (Daniel 3:17, ESV)

Devotion

Daniel 3 does not promise that faithful people will avoid the furnace. It shows three servants of God standing in front of it with a clear confession. God is able to deliver. Even if He does not do so in the way they hope, they will not bow.

That is holy courage without swagger. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are not trying to win an argument. They are bearing witness. Their conscience belongs to God, and their bodies are placed in His hands. When the king’s fire blazes hottest, a fourth figure appears with them in the flames.

Week 4 teaches suffering without shame and Christ as the pattern. Daniel 3 previews that pattern. The servants endure pressure without surrender, and God draws near in the fire. First Peter points to Christ, who suffered faithfully and entrusted Himself to the Father. Daniel gives a living picture of that same endurance: faith refusing to let go.

For Christians, the furnace story reaches its deepest meaning in Jesus. He entered the fire of judgment fully and came through death alive. Because He lives, no furnace gets final ownership over His people. The flames may touch the body, but they cannot consume the promise.

A next step today could be to name one place where pressure is tempting compromise and answer it with a simple confession: God is able, and He is worthy.

Prayer

Mighty Lord, grant the reader courage that does not bow to fear. In every furnace of pressure, be near with Your preserving presence. Through Christ, give a clean conscience, a steady witness, and confidence that fire cannot undo Your promise. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader know the nearness of God in every fiery trial.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves stand firm with quiet courage under every pressure.

Day 24: One Thing in the Dark

Scripture

Psalm 27

**“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”
(Psalm 27:1, ESV)**

Devotion

Psalm 27 holds bravery and trembling in the same prayer. David begins with fearless confidence, then later pleads, seeks, waits, and asks not to be forsaken. This is not a contradiction. It is faith speaking honestly under pressure.

The center of the psalm is simple and beautiful: “One thing have I asked of the Lord.” David wants to dwell with God, gaze on His beauty, and inquire in His temple. In danger, the deepest need is not merely escape. It is the presence of the Lord.

That fits Week 4 well. Endurance is not weakness. It is faith refusing to let go. First Peter points suffering believers to Christ as the pattern.

Psalm 27 gives language for that same posture. The heart is not pretending danger away. It is clinging to the Lord in the middle of it.

For Christians, this longing finds its answer in Jesus. He is the true light in the dark and the living temple where God meets His people. Because He suffered, died, and rose, the believer’s cry for God’s presence is not cast into emptiness. The risen Christ is near.

Waiting in the psalm is active, not empty. “Wait for the Lord; be strong.” Strength is found not in self-possession, but in patient trust. **A next step today could be** to bring one fear into prayer and then stay long enough in God’s presence to ask for more than relief—to ask for Him.

Prayer

Lord, be the reader’s light and salvation in every shadowed place. Replace panic with Your presence, and teach the heart to wait with courage. Through Christ, keep faith from letting go when pressure grows long. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader find strong courage in the presence of the Lord.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be upheld by God’s light in every dark season.

Day 25: The Man of Sorrows

Scripture

Isaiah 53:1–12

“He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.” (Isaiah 53:5, ESV)

Devotion

Isaiah 53 strips suffering of its disguises and then fills it with redeeming purpose. The Servant is despised, rejected, acquainted with grief, and treated as smitten by God. Yet the prophet reveals what eyes alone would miss: He is bearing the sin of others.

This is the deepest ground of Week 4. Christ under pressure is not merely an example of composure. He is the suffering substitute. First Peter’s Sunday anchor echoes Isaiah closely: He Himself bore sins in His body on the tree. Endurance matters because of who He is and what He is doing there.

The Servant does not suffer because He failed. He suffers because sinners did. His wounds heal because they carry guilt away. The text is honest about pain and honest about victory. The will of the Lord prospers in His hand. After making His soul an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days.

That means suffering does not get the final sentence. The cross is not defeat hidden under religious language. It is the place where Christ takes shame and turns it into peace for His people. The resurrection stands behind every line like dawn behind a dark ridge.

A next step today could be to confess one specific sin plainly and then answer it not with self-punishment, but with Isaiah's promise that the Servant was pierced for transgressions.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, suffering Servant and risen Savior, fix the reader's heart on Your redeeming wounds. Let shame lose its voice where Your cross has spoken peace, and grant strength to endure by resting in what You have done. Amen.

*What part of
today's reading
challenged me
most?*

Blessings for you

May the reader be healed in conscience by the wounds of Christ.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be drawn into the peace purchased by the suffering Servant.

Day 26: The Sound of a Rooster

Scripture

Matthew 26:69–75

“And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus.” (Matthew 26:75, ESV)

Devotion

Sometimes failure does not arrive with a crash. It comes in three small denials and the sound of a rooster before dawn. Peter’s collapse is painful because his love for Jesus was real. So was his fear.

Matthew does not soften the scene. Peter denies with increasing force that he knows Jesus. Then the rooster crows, memory returns, and Peter weeps bitterly. The tears matter. They show that conscience is alive, even though courage failed.

Week 4 is about conscience, endurance, and Christ as the pattern. Peter is not the pattern here; he is the warning and, soon enough, the comfort. He could not endure under pressure. Jesus could. The Savior under trial remains faithful while the disciple under scrutiny falls apart. That is why hope must rest finally in Christ and not in human nerve.

The Sunday anchor in 1 Peter is especially moving in light of this story. The same Peter who once denied Jesus later writes about following in Christ’s steps and entrusting oneself to God. Those words come from a man restored by mercy. Failure did not disqualify him forever because the risen Christ would seek him again.

A next step today could be to bring a recent failure into the light before Christ rather than hiding it, trusting that bitter tears are not the end of the story.

Prayer

Merciful Lord, look with compassion on the reader in every place of weakness and regret. Keep failure from hardening into despair, and let the faithful love of Christ lead to repentance, cleansing, and renewed courage. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be met by the mercy of Christ after every bitter failure.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves find restoration where fear has led them astray.

*What word or
phrase keeps
echoing in my
mind?*

Day 27: We Must Obey God

Scripture

Acts 5:27–32

“We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29, ESV)

Devotion

The apostles stand before power without becoming loud for its own sake. Their answer is clean and clear: “We must obey God rather than men.” This is witness, not ego. It is conscience fastened to the risen Christ.

The same Peter who once denied Jesus now speaks openly before authorities. The difference is not native boldness finally discovered. The difference is resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The apostles testify that God raised Jesus, whom men had killed, and exalted Him as Leader and Savior.

Week 4 teaches endurance without shame and Christ as the pattern. Acts 5 shows what that endurance looks like after Easter. Submission never means obedience to sin. When human authority commands silence about the Lord, faithful witness must speak. Yet even here, the goal is not to dominate the room. It is to tell the truth about Jesus.

The conscience stays clean because the message stays centered: forgiveness of sins is found in the exalted Christ. The Spirit is given by God. Suffering for this witness may follow, but shame need not. The apostles stand in continuity with their Lord, who suffered faithfully and was vindicated by the Father.

A next step today could be to speak one plain word about Christ in a place where silence has felt safer than witness.

Prayer

Exalted Jesus, give the reader a clean conscience and a steady mouth for truthful witness. Guard from fear, pride, and harshness. By Your Spirit, grant courage to obey God and to speak of forgiveness in Your name. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be filled with quiet courage to obey God above every lesser voice.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be strengthened to bear faithful witness with gentleness and conviction.

*What part of
today's reading
challenged me
most?*

Day 28: The Downward Way of Glory

Scripture

Philippians 2:5–11

“He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8, ESV)

Devotion

Philippians 2 shows the shape of Christ’s heart, and it is the opposite of grasping. Though He was in the form of God, He emptied Himself, took the form of a servant, and walked the long road downward into death on a cross.

That downward path is not humiliation without purpose. It is redeeming obedience. The One with every right to remain above all entered the human condition fully and gave Himself in love. Then the Father highly exalted Him. The way down was not the end. Glory came through obedience.

Week 4 turns on this pattern. Endurance is not weakness. Christ under pressure is the true model, but more than a model, He is the saving Lord whose cross and exaltation reshape Christian courage. First Peter calls believers to endure by keeping their eyes on Him. Philippians shows why that gaze produces humility rather than resentment.

Because Christ went low, His people do not need to scramble for status. Because Christ was vindicated, His people can endure losses without surrendering hope. Because His name is above every name, no earthly pressure outranks Him.

The Christian life will never outgrow this mind of Christ. Strength takes the form of service. Courage takes the form of obedience. Hope takes the form of waiting for the Father's vindication.

A next step today could be to choose one act of humble service that resists the urge to demand recognition.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, form in the reader the mind that was in You. Deliver from pride, grasping, and fear, and shape a life of humble obedience under Your exalted name. Let Your cross teach endurance and Your resurrection teach hope. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be strengthened by the humble and exalted Christ.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be served by hearts shaped after the pattern of Jesus.

Sunday Reflections

Time to Rest, Remember, and Be with Jesus

Looking Back on the Week

What has the Lord been showing me?

Notes & Reflections



Prayers & Thoughts for the Week Ahead

What am I bringing to Jesus this week?

- *Hopes & Concerns*

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Scriptures on My Heart*

- _____
- _____
- _____

People I'm Praying For

Who is on my heart this week?

- *Family & Friends*

- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Others in Need*

- _____
- _____
- _____



5th Sunday of Easter

Day 29: Built Together

Scripture

1 Peter 2:1–12

“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house.” (1 Peter 2:5, ESV)

Devotion

Stone sounds dead until Peter adds one word: living. In Christ, people who once were scattered and unsteady are being built into something holy and shared. The church is not a project of human assembly alone. God is building it.

Week 5 turns on church identity, vocation, and mission. Peter begins with Christ the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious in God’s sight. Then he says believers are being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. The language is rich because the identity is given, not achieved.

That is why the devotional pulse says God’s people are not trying to be the church; they are being built into it. The Sunday anchor places mercy at the center: once not a people, now God’s people; once not receiving mercy, now receiving mercy. Mission flows from that mercy. The church proclaims the excellencies of Him who called her out of darkness into marvelous light.

This means Christian vocation is communal and Christ-centered. People are joined to the cornerstone and, therefore, to one another. Stability is found not in personal strength but in being placed on Christ.

A next step today could be to encourage one fellow believer in a concrete way, remembering that every living stone matters in the house God is building.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, precious cornerstone, keep building Your people together in mercy. Give the reader joy in belonging to Your church and courage to proclaim Your excellencies with humility and love. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader know the strong joy of being built upon Christ the cornerstone.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be strengthened as living stones in the house God is raising.

Day 30: Treasured Possession

Scripture

Exodus 19:3–6

“You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples.”
(Exodus 19:5, ESV)

Devotion

At Sinai, God speaks identity before instruction. Before the commandments are given in full, the Lord reminds Israel what He has already done: He carried them on eagles’ wings and brought them to Himself. Rescue comes first. Belonging comes first.

Then He names them: treasured possession, kingdom of priests, holy nation. Those titles are not rewards for impressive behavior. They are covenant gifts from the God who saves. That pattern matters deeply for Week 5. Church identity and mission begin not with frantic effort, but with divine mercy.

First Peter borrows this Sinai language for the church. The point is not that Christians replace Israel by boasting. The point is that in Christ, God is still creating a people for His own possession. The church’s vocation is priestly and public. She belongs to God, and she stands in the world as a people through whom His praise is spoken.

Because Christ is the true Passover Lamb and risen Lord, the church's treasured identity is anchored even more deeply than Sinai. Rescue from slavery has become rescue from sin and death. The holy nation is gathered around the crucified and risen cornerstone.

Mission, then, is not a desperate attempt to matter. It is the overflow of being held as precious by God. **A next step today could be** to thank God specifically for making His people His possession before asking what task comes next.

Prayer

Covenant Lord, remind the reader that rescue and belonging come from Your mercy. Through Christ, deepen the joy of being Your treasured possession, and let that joy become priestly service and faithful praise in the world. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader rest in the holy dignity of belonging to God.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be gathered into the mercy and vocation of God's treasured people.

Day 31: The Rejected Stone Sings

Scripture

Psalm 118:19–29

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” (Psalm 118:22, ESV)

Devotion

Psalm 118 sounds like a procession song with scars still visible. There has been pressure, conflict, and near-collapse, yet the singer enters with thanksgiving because the Lord has answered and become salvation.

At the center stands the rejected stone made cornerstone. The image is both surprising and full of hope. Human judgment throws the stone aside. God places it at the center of the whole structure. What men dismiss, God establishes.

Week 5 is about church identity and mission, and this psalm gives the architecture. First Peter uses this cornerstone language to describe Christ. He is the rejected and chosen One. Therefore the people joined to Him need not fear human dismissal as the final verdict. Their worth and place come from God’s building project, not from the builders who misjudged the stone.

The psalm also rings with Easter joy. “This is the day that the Lord has made.” In the light of resurrection, those words burn even brighter. The crucified Jesus, rejected by the world, has become the cornerstone through His rising. The church lives from that reversal. Mercy turns rejection into mission.

A next step today could be to thank Christ for being a stronger cornerstone than human approval, especially in a place where rejection has felt heavy.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, rejected by men and chosen by God, steady the reader upon Your unshakable mercy. Turn every fear of dismissal into confidence in Your resurrection victory, and make life fruitful in the house You are building. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader stand firm on the cornerstone whom God has established forever.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be strengthened where rejection has wounded them, finding their place in Christ.

Day 32: A House Forever

Scripture

2 Samuel 7:8–16

“Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.” (2 Samuel 7:16, ESV)

Devotion

David wants to build a house for God, but God turns the conversation around. The Lord reminds David that He has been the One acting all along—taking, leading, giving rest. Then He promises to build David a house instead.

This is covenant mercy in royal form. God pledges a lasting kingdom, a son, and a throne established forever. In the near horizon, Solomon will taste part of that promise. In the far horizon, Christ will fulfill it completely. The promise stretches beyond ordinary dynasty into everlasting kingship.

Week 5 focuses on church identity and mission. This passage helps because the church exists under promise before she acts in service. God is the builder. His people are recipients before they become participants. Peter says believers are being built into a spiritual house. Second Samuel 7 shows the deep root of that reality: God Himself delights to establish a dwelling and a kingdom through His anointed Son.

In Jesus, David's greater Son, the forever house becomes living and worldwide. He is the risen King who cannot be dethroned. The church's mission stands secure because her King's throne stands secure.

That changes the way labor is done. Service becomes grateful rather than frantic. The kingdom does not depend on human ingenuity to survive. It rests on the promise of God fulfilled in Christ.

A next step today could be to serve in one practical way while remembering that God is the true builder and Christ is the forever King.

Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the kingdom You have established in the Son of David. Keep the reader from anxious striving, and give joy in serving within the house that Christ Himself upholds forever. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be made glad by the unshakable reign of Christ the King.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be sheltered in the mercy and stability of God's everlasting house.

Day 33: A Sure Foundation

Scripture

Isaiah 28:14–17

“Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation.” (Isaiah 28:16, ESV)

Devotion

When people feel threatened, they make agreements with false safety. Isaiah confronts leaders who have trusted lies and called them shelter. Into that false confidence God speaks of a better refuge: a tested and precious cornerstone laid by God Himself.

A sure foundation is not built from cleverness, panic, or denial. It is laid by the Lord. That matters for Week 5 because the church’s identity and mission depend on where she stands. She is not built on trends, charisma, or self-invention. She is built on Christ.

First Peter echoes this text directly. The living stones have stability only because the cornerstone is sure. Isaiah also adds a searching note: God’s justice is the measuring line. False refuges will not survive that plumb line. This makes mission honest. God’s people cannot show forth His mercy while hiding under lies.

In Jesus, the tested stone has been proven through rejection, cross, and resurrection. He has passed through pressure and stands forever. Therefore the church can face the world without frantic self-protection. Mercy and truth can live together because Christ is both solid and saving.

A next step today could be to identify one false refuge—approval, control, busyness, or denial—and bring it to Christ, asking to stand again on the sure foundation.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, precious cornerstone, expose every false shelter and draw the reader back onto Your sure foundation. Let truth and mercy meet in the life You are building, and make that life stable for the sake of witness. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader rest on the tested stone that cannot crack beneath pressure.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be delivered from false refuges and grounded in Christ alone.

*Who am I
praying for
today?*

Day 34: Remaining on the Vine

Scripture

John 15:1–17

**“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.”
(John 15:5, ESV)**

Devotion

Fruit looks effortless when it is healthy, but the secret is hidden in the connection. Jesus says He is the true vine, and His disciples are branches. Life does not begin in the branch. It flows from the vine.

That truth serves Week 5 well. Church identity and vocation grow from union with Christ. God’s people are not trying to manufacture church-life from willpower. They are being built, fed, and made fruitful by abiding in the Son. Mission is not performance for God. It is life from God extending outward.

Jesus speaks plainly: apart from Him, nothing can be done. That sentence humbles the church and frees her. The pressure to self-generate meaning falls away. The calling becomes clear: remain in Christ, receive His word, and bear fruit through love and obedience.

The passage also makes love central. The fruit Jesus especially names is sacrificial love shaped by His own pattern. "As I have loved you." Resurrection life does not stay private. It travels outward through branches into the world as tangible, Christ-shaped care.

The church's mission to show forth God's mercy depends on this abiding. **A next step today could be** to set aside unhurried time in Christ's word, treating that time not as an extra task but as the root of all fruitful service.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, true Vine, keep the reader close to You. Let Your word remain richly, Your love run deeply, and Your life bear fruit through ordinary obedience. Guard from self-reliance and fill the heart with abiding joy. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader remain in Christ and bear fruit that lasts.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be nourished by the living love that flows from Jesus through His people.

Day 35: Ambassadors of Mercy

Scripture

2 Corinthians 5:14–21

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV)

Devotion

Paul speaks like a man seized by love. “The love of Christ controls us.” That is a strong phrase, and it fits the church’s mission well. Christian witness is not driven mainly by pressure, guilt, or image. It is driven by the crucified and risen love of Christ.

Week 5 is about church identity, vocation, and mission as showing forth God’s mercy. Second Corinthians 5 gathers all three. Identity: in Christ, a new creation.

Vocation: ambassadors for Christ.
Mission: the ministry of reconciliation. The church does not invent this message. God gives it and sends His people with it.

The center is substitution. Christ knew no sin, yet God made Him to be sin for sinners, so that in Him they might become the righteousness of God. This is mercy with a voice and a destination. It travels through ambassadors into a world still estranged from God.

That makes Christian mission deeply hopeful. The church is not offering self-help or moral repair. She is announcing that in the risen Christ, reconciliation is real. The cornerstone is secure. The house is being built. And those who belong to Him carry His invitation into the world.

A next step today could be to pray for one strained relationship or one far-off person, asking God to open a door for the ministry of reconciliation.

Prayer

God of reconciliation, let the love of Christ rule the reader's heart. Deepen the joy of being made new in Him, and send that newness outward in words and actions that carry Your mercy to others. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader live as a joyful ambassador of Christ's reconciling mercy.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be drawn toward peace with God and with one another through Christ.

*Who needs
encouragement
from me today?*

Sunday Reflections

Time to Rest, Remember, and Be with Jesus

Looking Back on the Week

What has the Lord been showing me?

Notes & Reflections



Prayers & Thoughts for the Week Ahead

What am I bringing to Jesus this week?

- *Hopes & Concerns*

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Scriptures on My Heart*

- _____
- _____
- _____

People I'm Praying For

Who is on my heart this week?

- *Family & Friends*

- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Others in Need*

- _____
- _____
- _____



6th Sunday of Easter

Day 36: Gentle Courage

Scripture

1 Peter 3:8–22

“In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” (1 Peter 3:15, ESV)

Devotion

Peter joins courage and gentleness without apology. That pairing is rare enough to feel almost miraculous. The Christian witness is meant to be ready, clear, and honest, but also marked by gentleness and respect.

Week 6 turns on hopeful witness that is not obnoxious. The goal is not to win arguments. It is to bear witness. Peter begins with a shared life—unity, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, a humble mind—and then moves toward public testimony. The manner of life and the words of witness belong together.

At the center stands Christ. Hearts are to honor Him as holy. That inner reverence steadies outward speech. People do not need to be controlled when Christ is enthroned. Even suffering need not destroy hope, because Christ Himself suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring sinners to God.

This Sunday anchor keeps witness from becoming technique. Hope is not a slogan. It is resurrection life rooted in Jesus. The defense Peter describes is not sharp-edged self-protection. It is the calm naming of a hope strong enough to survive hostility.

A next step today could be to prepare one simple sentence explaining the hope found in Christ, and to ask God for a gentle opportunity to speak it.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, be honored as holy in the reader's heart. Give a gentle mouth, a clean conscience, and a hope steady enough to bear witness without fear or harshness. Let suffering never silence the truth of Your resurrection life. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader carry a hope that speaks with both courage and gentleness.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves hear a faithful witness to Christ wrapped in humility and peace.

Day 37: A Soft Answer

Scripture

Proverbs 15:1–4

**“A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
(Proverbs 15:1, ESV)**

Devotion

Speech can pour oil or water on a fire. Proverbs says a soft answer turns away wrath. That is not weakness. It is strength disciplined by wisdom.

Week 6 is about hopeful witness that does not become obnoxious. This proverb fits because words often decide whether a conversation becomes a battlefield or a doorway. A harsh word may feel powerful in the moment, but it usually multiplies heat without producing light. A soft answer can create room for truth to be heard.

The passage keeps speaking. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge. Gentle speech is a tree of life. Crooked speech breaks the spirit. The Christian witness should hear all of that. Truth and tone are not enemies. In fact, truthful witness often depends on disciplined tone.

Peter’s Sunday anchor calls for a defense made with gentleness and respect. Proverbs provides practical wisdom for that posture. When Christ is honored as holy in the heart, the mouth can afford to slow down. There is no need to win by force. The goal is to bear witness to living hope.

Jesus Himself is the deeper pattern. He did not answer every attack with thunder. Often He spoke with piercing truth and measured calm. His resurrection frees the church from panic in conversation.

A next step today could be to pause before answering one tense remark and ask for words that are both honest and gentle.

Prayer

Lord, govern the reader's tongue with holy wisdom. Let speech carry truth without sharp pride, and give a soft answer where anger is rising. Through Christ, make the mouth a tree of life for others. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader's words become a quiet shelter where truth can be heard.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be refreshed by speech marked with gentleness and grace.

*What part of
today's reading
challenged me
most?*

Day 38: The Brokenhearted and the Bold

Scripture

Psalm 34

“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18, ESV)

Devotion

Psalm 34 speaks with both joy and scars. David blesses the Lord, invites the humble to hear, and then gives language for fear, trouble, affliction, and brokenheartedness. Hope here is not denial. It is testimony born from rescue.

Week 6 calls for witness that bears hope without becoming abrasive. Psalm 34 helps because it teaches how hope sounds when it has passed through pain. The psalmist does not pretend the righteous avoid affliction. He says plainly that they have many afflictions. Then he adds the stronger truth: the Lord delivers.

That combination creates credible witness. People do not need polished slogans from the church. They need the truth that the Lord hears, sees, is near, and saves. First Peter echoes this psalm’s spirit by calling believers to bless rather than curse and to seek peace. A clean conscience grows where the fear of the Lord is learned.

In Christ, this nearness becomes even more concrete. The One who suffered and rose again is not distant from the crushed in spirit. Resurrection hope does not erase tears, but it refuses to let tears be the only testimony.

A next step today could be to speak one honest sentence about God's faithfulness in a painful season, letting truth be simple and unforced.

Prayer

Near Lord, draw close to the reader in every brokenhearted place. Give courage to testify to Your faithfulness without pretense, and let the hope of the risen Christ shine clearly through honest words and humble peace.
Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader know the nearness of the Lord in both sorrow and witness.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be comforted by God's presence and by truthful words of hope.

*What fear do I
need to confess
today?*

Day 39: The Name Placed on the People

Scripture

Numbers 6:22–27

“So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:27, ESV)

Devotion

The priestly blessing is not a warm ending tacked onto worship. It is God’s own name placed upon His people. The Lord blesses, keeps, shines, is gracious, lifts up His countenance, and gives peace.

Week 6 speaks of blessing in hostile air. This text goes even deeper. God does not merely tell His people to bless others. He first blesses them. Before the witness goes outward, peace comes downward from the Lord Himself. Identity precedes speech once again.

That matters because hostile settings can make believers defensive or brittle. Numbers 6 reminds the church that she lives under a spoken favor. God’s face is turned toward His people in grace. Those who are kept by such peace are less likely to answer the world with panic.

Peter calls Christians to bless when reviled, because to this they were called. The priestly blessing makes that possible. A people carrying God's name can become a people who extend God's peace. In Christ, this blessing reaches its fullness, for the true high priest has risen and continues to place God's gracious favor upon His own.

A next step today could be to pray this blessing slowly over one troubled relationship, asking that God's peace would shape both heart and speech.

Prayer

Lord, place Your name deeply upon the reader again today. Let Your face shine with grace, steady the heart with peace, and turn that peace outward in words and actions of blessing through Christ. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader live beneath the shining face and keeping peace of the Lord.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be sheltered and refreshed by the blessing of God.

Ascension of Our Lord

Day 40: Love Past the Border

Scripture

Luke 6:27–36

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you.” (Luke 6:27–28, ESV)

Devotion

Jesus stretches love beyond instinct, fairness, and comfort. He speaks of enemies, curses, hatred, and taking from those who cannot repay. This is not ordinary social wisdom. It is kingdom life shaped by the mercy of God.

Week 6 centers on hopeful witness with a clean conscience. Luke 6 shows how that witness takes flesh. Christian speech and action are not meant to mirror the hostility they receive. The church bears witness best when she refuses to be remade in the image of her enemies.

The command is impossible apart from Christ. Only the One who loved enemies from the cross can create such mercy in His people. Jesus roots the whole passage in the Father’s character: “He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.” Then comes the command, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

This is not softness toward evil. It is strength refusing revenge. Peter says the goal is not to win arguments, but to bear witness. Luke 6 shows that witness in practice. Blessing those who curse is not passivity. It is a public declaration that Christ's mercy is stronger than the world's reflexes.

A next step today could be to pray blessing over one difficult person by name, asking God to keep the heart from settling into contempt.

Prayer

Merciful Father, shape the reader by the enemy-loving mercy of Jesus. Guard the heart from revenge and the mouth from cursing. Give strength to do good, to bless, and to witness with a conscience kept clean by grace. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be made strong in the hard, bright mercy of Christ.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be protected from bitterness and formed into people of blessing.

Day 41: Seasoned Words

Scripture

Colossians 4:2–6

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt.”
(Colossians 4:6, ESV)

Devotion

Paul links prayer and speech as if they belong to the same breath. Devote yourselves to prayer, he says, and then he turns to open doors, clear words, wise conduct, and gracious speech. Witness grows best in a praying life.

Week 6 is about hopeful witness in hostile air. Colossians 4 gives the posture. Speech should be gracious and seasoned with salt—clear, preserving, memorable, and alive. Not flat. Not harsh. Not cowardly. Grace and substance belong together.

Paul also asks for prayer that he may make the mystery of Christ clear. That request is humbling. Even an apostle knows that witness depends on God opening doors and sustaining clarity. The church does not control outcomes. She prays, walks in wisdom, and speaks of Christ faithfully.

This fits Peter’s instruction to make a defense with gentleness and respect. The witness is not improvised from personal intensity. It is cultivated through prayer, wise conduct, and words that carry both truth and grace. The center remains Christ, the mystery now revealed, crucified and risen.

A next step today could be to pray before one likely conversation, asking God for an open door and for speech that is both gracious and clear.

Prayer

Lord, teach the reader to pray and speak in the same Spirit. Open doors for the word of Christ, and give gracious, salty speech that carries truth with wisdom and peace. Keep witness clear and the heart humble. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader's words be seasoned with grace and useful for faithful witness.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves hear speech that is wise, kind, and full of Christ.

*Who needs
encouragement
from me today?*

Day 42: The Lord's Servant Must Not Be Quarrelsome

Scripture

2 Timothy 2:22–26

“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil.” (2 Timothy 2:24, ESV)

Devotion

There is a kind of religious energy that loves the fight more than the truth. Paul cuts against that spirit sharply. The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome.

Week 6 needs this warning. The goal is not to win arguments. It is to bear witness. Paul calls for righteousness, faith, love, and peace, pursued alongside others who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Then he describes the servant of Christ with striking balance: kind, able to teach, patient under evil, correcting opponents with gentleness.

That posture is not weak. It is strategic mercy. God may perhaps grant repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth. The witness remains clear, but it is carried in a manner that leaves room for God to work. Harshness may dominate a moment. Gentleness often serves the truth better over time.

Peter's Sunday anchor said to honor Christ as holy in the heart. Paul shows one consequence of that inner reverence: less quarrelsome speech, more patient teaching, more hopeful correction. The servant does not need to act as if conversion rests on force. Christ is alive, and His Spirit is able to awaken the trapped.

A next step today could be to step back from one needless argument and redirect that energy toward prayerful, patient truth-telling.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, make the reader a servant marked by kindness, patience, and truth. Deliver from the hunger to quarrel, and give gentle courage that trusts You to open minds and free hearts through the Gospel. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader bear witness with a spirit that is strong, patient, and gentle.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be helped by truth spoken without quarrelsome heat.

7th Sunday of Easter

Day 43: The Shepherd Gets the Last Word

Scripture

1 Peter 4:12–19 and 5:1–12

“After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace... will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” (1 Peter 5:10, ESV)

Devotion

Peter does not flatter suffering by calling it easy. He calls it fiery. He does not speak as if trials are pleasant interruptions. He speaks as a shepherd telling the truth. Yet he also refuses to let suffering have the final word.

Week 7 holds two themes together: trials as refining and God as restoring Shepherd. Believers are not to be surprised by fiery trials as though something strange were happening. In Christ, suffering can become a refining fire rather than proof of abandonment. The Christian shares Christ’s sufferings now and will share His glory later.

Peter then turns to elders and to the whole flock. Shepherding must be willing, eager, and exemplary. The church under pressure does not need lords. She needs under-shepherds who reflect the Chief Shepherd. Humility, vigilance, and resistance to the devil all matter, but over all of it stands this promise: the God of all grace will Himself restore His people.

This is the Sunday anchor for the whole week. Trials do not get the last word. The Shepherd does. Christ, crucified and risen, is not watching from far away. He is the Chief Shepherd who guards, restores, and establishes His flock.

A next step today could be to place one current trial under this promise in writing: the God of all grace will Himself restore.

Prayer

Chief Shepherd, keep the reader through every fiery trial. Refine faith without letting despair consume it, and let Your restoring grace speak louder than present pain. Strengthen, confirm, and establish every heart in hope. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be held by the Shepherd whose grace outlasts every trial.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be restored and strengthened by the God of all grace.

Day 44: Through the Fire, Refined

Scripture

Zechariah 13:7–9

**“I will put this third into the fire,
and refine them as one refines
silver.” (Zechariah 13:9, ESV)**

Devotion

Refining fire is not gentle, but it is purposeful. Zechariah speaks of striking the shepherd, scattered sheep, and a remnant brought through fire. The image is severe, yet the end is covenant speech: “They will call upon my name, and I will answer them.”

Week 7 teaches suffering as refining and God as restoring Shepherd. Zechariah fits both themes. Fire is not random here. It exposes, purifies, and leaves a people who know the Lord more truly. The goal is not destruction but a cleansed relationship: “They are my people.”

The line about the shepherd being struck reaches forward to Christ. Jesus Himself quotes this text on the night of His betrayal. He is the Shepherd struck for the sheep. Therefore Christian suffering is never detached from His own. The church passes through refining only under the care of the Shepherd who was first wounded and then raised.

That matters because trials often feel meaningless while they burn. Zechariah gives a hard mercy: the fire may hurt deeply, but it does not erase belonging. It can become the place where God's name is called on with greater honesty and where His answer is heard more clearly.

A next step today could be to pray a simple covenant prayer in the middle of a hard season: "Lord, these are Your people; hear and answer."

Prayer

Lord, bring the reader through every refining fire without losing hold. Purify faith, deepen prayer, and let the wounded and risen Shepherd remain near in every painful season. Answer Your people and keep them in covenant mercy. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader come through trial with faith made cleaner and hope made stronger.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be preserved and purified under the Shepherd's care.

Day 45: The Shepherd in the Valley

Scripture

Psalm 23

**“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”
(Psalm 23:4, ESV)**

Devotion

Psalm 23 is often read in still rooms, but its strength was forged for dark valleys. The psalm does not deny enemies, want, shadow, or death. It simply declares that none of them outrank the Shepherd.

Week 7 is built on the promise that the Shepherd gets the last word. Psalm 23 gives the emotional and spiritual center of that hope. The Lord leads, restores, guides, protects, prepares, anoints, and pursues with goodness and mercy. The sheep contribute little except need, but the Shepherd contributes everything necessary.

The valley is especially important. David does not say the Shepherd keeps every path bright. He says the Shepherd is present in the shadow. That is what makes courage possible. Fear is not defeated by positive thinking. It is displaced by companionship. “For you are with me.”

In Christ, Psalm 23 grows even fuller. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and rises again. The valley of death has been entered and broken from the inside.

Therefore the flock's hope is not romantic. It is resurrection-shaped.

A next step today could be to pray Psalm 23 aloud slowly, lingering over each verb that describes what the Shepherd does for His sheep.

Prayer

Good Shepherd, lead the reader through every valley with Your steady presence. Restore what is worn down, quiet what is afraid, and let goodness and mercy be more believable than the shadows. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader walk the valley with fearless trust in the Shepherd's nearness.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be led, restored, and comforted by the Lord who shepherds His own.

*What burden do
I need to hand
over to the Lord
today?*

Day 46: I Myself Will Search

Scripture

Ezekiel 34:11–16

“Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.”
(Ezekiel 34:11, ESV)

Devotion

When human shepherds fail, God does not shrug. Ezekiel 34 is full of divine resolve. The Lord Himself will search, rescue, gather, feed, bind up, strengthen, and judge.

That promise lands with force in Week 7. The church needs under-shepherds, but the deepest hope is never in them. Peter says elders serve under the Chief Shepherd. Ezekiel reveals why that is such good news: the Lord Himself refuses to abandon the flock to neglect and scattering.

The verbs in this passage are tender and strong. The Lord seeks the lost, brings back the strayed, binds up the injured, and strengthens the weak. This is not sentimental shepherding. It is active, personal, restorative care. God’s people are not left to find their own way home.

In Jesus, Ezekiel 34 receives flesh and voice. He is the Shepherd who goes after the sheep, feeds the flock, and lays down His life. The resurrection means that the Shepherd still lives to seek and restore. Trials, wounds, and failures do not place anyone beyond His pursuit.

A next step today could be to ask where a life or relationship feels scattered and to pray specifically for the Shepherd's gathering and healing work there.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, seek out every scattered place in the reader's life. Gather what has drifted, bind what is wounded, and strengthen what has grown weak. Let the reader rest in the promise that the Shepherd still searches and still restores. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader be found again and again by the seeking mercy of the Shepherd.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be gathered, healed, and carried by the Lord's own hand.

*What part of
today's reading
challenged me
most?*

Day 47: Do You Love Me?

Scripture

John 21:15–19

“Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17, ESV)

Devotion

The risen Jesus does not leave Peter inside old failure. He meets him by a charcoal fire—the kind of setting that must have stirred deep memory—and asks the same question three times: “Do you love me?” The repetition hurts, but it also heals.

Week 7 includes shepherding under the care of the Chief Shepherd. John 21 shows how such shepherding begins: not with a perfect record, but with restoring grace from Christ. Peter’s denials are not ignored. They are answered by Jesus’ patient, piercing restoration.

Each time Peter confesses love, Jesus gives him sheep to tend. That calling is humbling. Peter is not asked to build a platform or defend his reputation. He is entrusted with Christ’s flock. The sheep remain Christ’s. The shepherding remains under Christ’s authority.

The passage also carries a sober note. Following Jesus will involve cost. Peter will glorify God even in death. Yet this call comes from the risen Lord who has already gone through death and come out the other side. Restoration does not lead Peter into ease. It leads him into faithful love.

A next step today could be to bring one old failure before the risen Christ and ask not only for forgiveness, but also for renewed usefulness in serving others.

Prayer

Risen Lord, restore the reader where old failure still aches. Speak again with mercy, give renewed love for Christ, and make that love fruitful in patient care for others under the Chief Shepherd's eye. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader hear Christ's restoring voice stronger than every old denial.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves be served by hearts healed and recommissioned by Jesus.

*What burden do
I need to hand
over to the Lord
today?*

Day 48: Asking for Wisdom Under Pressure

Scripture

James 1:2–12

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.” (James 1:12, ESV)

Devotion

James does not ask Christians to pretend trials are pleasant. He asks them to see what God can produce through them. Testing can grow steadfastness, and steadfastness can mature faith.

Week 7 speaks of suffering as refining. James agrees, but he adds a practical gift: wisdom. In the middle of pressure, believers are invited to ask God for wisdom without doubting His generosity. That is a precious promise. Trial does not only expose weakness. It can also become a place where God gives clearer sight.

The passage also warns against blaming God for inner instability. The issue in trial is not merely external pain, but the divided heart. Steadfastness grows as trust learns to hold under strain. The crown of life is promised not to the flashy or the untroubled, but to the one who remains steadfast.

This connects beautifully to Peter's promise that the God of all grace will restore and strengthen. Christ is the deeper ground of such steadfastness. He endured the cross, rose again, and now holds His people through refining seasons. Trials do not get the last word. The Shepherd does.

A next step today could be to ask God specifically for wisdom concerning one present trial instead of only asking for immediate relief.

Prayer

Generous God, give the reader wisdom in the middle of every testing season. Form steadfastness through what is hard, guard the heart from division, and keep the crown of life in view through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader remain steadfast under trial with wisdom from above.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves receive endurance and clarity in every hard season.

Day 49: Treasure in a Clay Jar

Scripture

2 Corinthians 4:7–18

“We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7, ESV)

Devotion

Paul does not hide weakness. He names it in blunt images: clay jars, affliction, perplexity, persecution, being struck down. The Gospel does not require stronger containers. It places treasure inside fragile ones.

That is a fitting close to Week 7. Trials refine, but the point is not to turn Christians into steel. The point is to reveal God’s surpassing power.

Weakness becomes a stage on which resurrection life can be seen. “Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested.”

This keeps suffering from becoming self-focused. The jar is not the wonder. Christ is. The outer self wastes away, yes, but the inner self is renewed day by day. The affliction is real, but it is also preparing an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Peter says the God of all grace will restore and establish. Paul says the unseen things are eternal. Together they train the church to look beyond what can be measured today. The Shepherd gets the last word, and that word is resurrection.

A next step today could be to name one personal weakness without shame and ask how the life of Jesus might be made visible there.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, place Your treasure boldly within the reader's fragile life. In weakness, show Your power. In affliction, renew the inner life. Lift the eyes from what is seen to the eternal glory You are preparing. Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader carry weakness without shame and Christ's treasure without fear.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves see the life of Jesus shining through fragile, faithful lives.

*What am I
thankful for
today?*

Sunday Reflections

Time to Rest, Remember, and Be with Jesus

Looking Back on the Week

What has the Lord been showing me?

Notes & Reflections



Prayers & Thoughts for the Week Ahead

What am I bringing to Jesus this week?

- *Hopes & Concerns*

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Scriptures on My Heart*

- _____
- _____
- _____

People I'm Praying For

Who is on my heart this week?

- *Family & Friends*

- _____
- _____
- _____

- *Others in Need*

- _____
- _____
- _____



Pentecost

Day 50: Fire in the Mouth

Scripture

Acts 2:14, 29–41

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:36, ESV)

Devotion

Pentecost fire does not land as noise for its own sake. It becomes Christ proclaimed. Peter stands and speaks with a steadiness that can only be explained by the Spirit of God and the resurrection of Jesus.

Week 8 reaches its climax here: Christ proclaimed; repentance and promise; Spirit poured out for witness. Peter does not use the moment to draw attention to the spectacle. He drives toward Jesus—crucified, raised, exalted. The Spirit does not hype people up; He plants Christ in their mouth.

The sermon is sharp, and it is gracious. Peter names sin plainly: “this Jesus whom you crucified.” But he also announces promise: forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are given in Jesus’ name. The hearers are cut to the heart, not to be destroyed, but to be brought to repentance and life.

This is the fitting end of the whole series. The empty tomb has led to living hope, holy belonging, steadfast endurance, church identity, gentle witness, and refined faith. Now that hope catches fire in testimony. The risen Christ does not merely comfort the church inwardly. He sends her outward with His name on her lips.

A next step today could be to pray for one open door to speak the name of Jesus with clarity, humility, and confidence in the Spirit's work.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, fill the reader with a Christ-centered boldness that is clean, clear, and full of mercy. Let the name of Jesus rise with conviction and love, bringing repentance, forgiveness, and living hope wherever it is heard.
Amen.

Blessings for you

May the reader speak of Christ with Spirit-given courage and holy joy.

Blessings for others in your life

May those the reader loves hear the name of Jesus and be cut to the heart for life, forgiveness, and hope.

You Made It, But More Than That... You Kept Walking

Congratulations on completing these 50 days.

Not in a “check the box, you did the thing” kind of way... but in the deeper, better way. You showed up. You kept turning your attention back to Jesus. You opened His Word. You paused in the middle of real life to listen, to pray, to reflect, to be with Him. That matters more than you know.

My prayer is that this journey has been a blessing to your relationship with Jesus, not just for these pages, but for your everyday life. That you have seen Him a little more clearly, trusted Him a little more deeply, and rested a little more fully in His grace.

And here’s the beautiful part... this is not the finish line. This is a doorway.

From the empty tomb to Pentecost fire, we have walked through the story of hope, from fear to faith, from uncertainty to boldness. And now that same living hope goes with you. Into your home, your work, your conversations, your questions, your joys, your struggles. Jesus is not staying on the page. He is with you.

We at **South Lake Church** would love to continue walking alongside you in that journey of faith in Jesus Christ, our living hope. Whether you’ve been part of South Lake for years or are just getting to know us through this devotion, you are invited. There is room for you here, to grow, to belong, to keep discovering what it means to follow Jesus together.

So as you turn the last page of this devotion, hold onto this promise:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

1 Peter 1:3

That is your identity. That is your hope. That is your future.

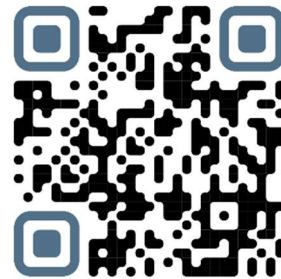
Keep walking with Jesus. Keep returning to His Word. Keep receiving His grace. And keep stepping forward in the life He has given you.

We’re grateful to be part of your journey.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Rob Bailey
South Lake Church

Follow Along at
SouthLakeLC.Org/Living-Hope



Any Prayers Answered During the
Devotional?

