

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

August 20 - August 26

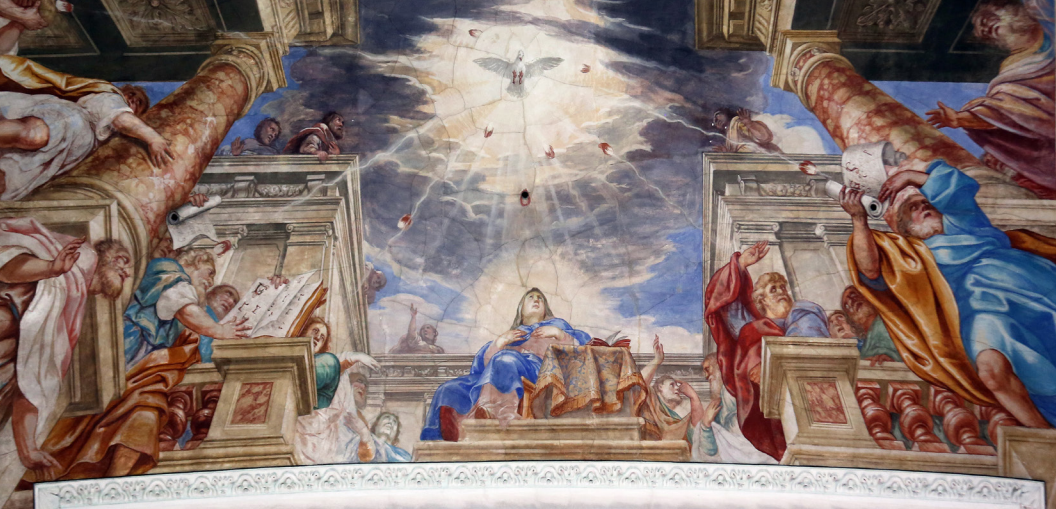


SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

As we pause to consider this week's Gospel passage in Matthew 16:13-20, we are invited to stroll with Jesus and his disciples as they arrive in the region of Caesarea Philippi (an ancient Roman city at the southwestern base of Mount Hermon), where Jesus decides to conduct an opinion poll. He asks, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" The replies pour in immediately: "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (v. 14).

If we freeze this scene for a moment and expand our line of sight across the Book of Matthew, we see a wide array of responses to Jesus. Some bowed down and worshipped him. Others were threatened or offended by him. Still others, humbled and honored, responded with immediate obedience, following him, listening attentively, and marveling at his teachings. People exhibited humility and great faith. They were healed by him. They had questions and confusion. A few pleaded with him to leave, calling him a blasphemer and rebuking him. Others wanted a miraculous sign. Still others were paranoid and indignant. People doubted who he was, what he was doing, and why he did it.

Although it may seem odd to ask about public opinion, it is simply a conversation starter. Intellectual assent is not the point. Jesus goes straight to the heart of the matter because the heart matters. He intentionally shifts his disciples' focus from the head (hearing what others say about him) to the heart. In verse 15 he asks, "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" That is what matters most. Jesus. You. In conversation with one another, growing in personal relationship with each other.



So, if you are standing nearby and Jesus asks, “Who do you say I am?” what would you say? Would you join the long list of responses to Jesus throughout Matthew? Or the shorter, more focused list the disciples offered? Perhaps you would draw on podcasts you’ve heard, books you’ve read, or ideas from intellectuals you’ve encountered?

More directly: Would you answer from your intellect? Or would you offer a personal, relational response from the core of your being, your heart?

Verse 16 says, “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’” This declaration identifies who Jesus is, why he is here, and what he means to Simon Peter’s life. Jesus responds with a blessing, acknowledging that Simon Peter’s answer did not come from his head but from his heart, guided by his personal relationship.

FOR reflection

Where is Jesus in your daily life? Do you sense he is near? Are you in conversation with him, building a personal relationship? Have you said yes to Jesus? Please know he is always ready to walk with you through life. Simply pray, sharing with Jesus that you are ready to walk with him today.





SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday

Psalm 124; Genesis 49:1-33; 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Friday

Psalm 124; Genesis 49:29-50:14; 2 Corinthians 10:12-18

Saturday

Psalm 124; Genesis 50:15-26; Matthew 16:5-12

Sunday

Psalm 124; Exodus 1:8-2:10; Isaiah 51:1-6; Psalm 138;
Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

Monday

Psalm 8; Exodus 1:1-7; Romans 2:1-11

Tuesday

Psalm 8; Exodus 2:11-15a; Romans 11:33-36

Wednesday

Psalm 8; Exodus 2:15b-22; Matthew 26:6-13

Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

The Morning Liturgy

Opening Scripture

For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

Isaiah 57:15

Opening Prayer *(based on Psalm 51)*

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

Scripture Reading *(read Psalm and Gospel text here)*

Period of Silence

Confessing Our Faith *(Apostles' Creed)*

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect *(Proper 16)*

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

A Midday Prayer

Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms. Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your mercies' sake. *Amen.*

An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen.*

A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

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

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.





Image: The Baptism of The Holy Spirit | Artist: Rebecca Brogan | www.jtbarts.com