

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

August 27 - September 2



SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

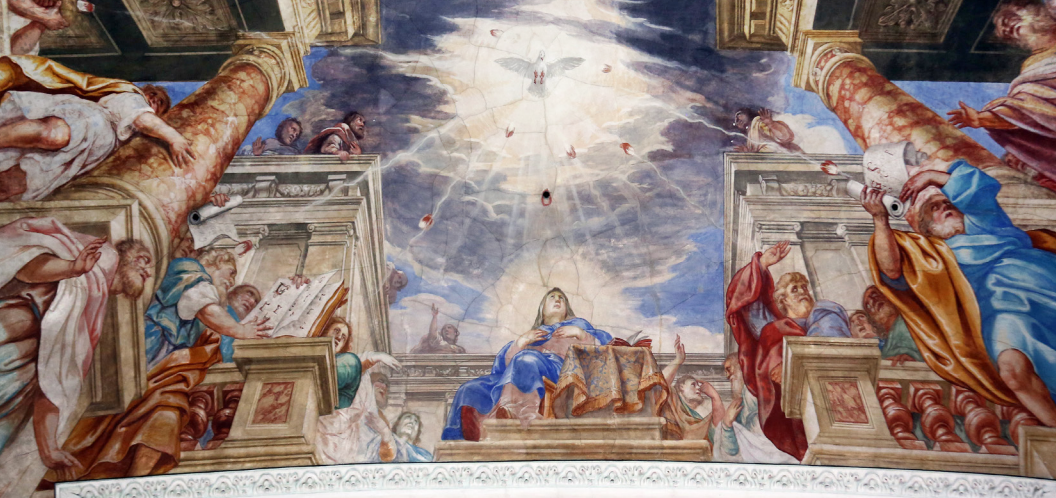
There is a hinge in the Gospel of Matthew and we are standing on it.

From this point on, Matthew tells us, Jesus *began to show* his disciples what discipleship actually costs—not in the abstract, but in his own body: suffering, rejection, death, and on the third day, rising. The road to Jerusalem isn't a detour from the kingdom. It's the kingdom's only road.

Peter simply can't bear this. And his protest, "God forbid it, Lord!" comes across as love that hasn't yet learned the way of the cross. Peter wants a Messiah who saves without dying and a glory without a grave. Jesus' answer is startling in its severity: "Get behind me, Satan." ***Perhaps Jesus is saying that the temptation to avoid suffering, dressed in the language of care, is one of the oldest and most seductive temptations. Even our tenderness and instincts to protect one another can unintentionally become a stumbling block to God's will.***

And then the turn: If the kingdom way runs through a cross, so must the disciples. *Take up your cross* was not yet a metaphor for Matthew's first hearers. It was an image drawn straight from the killing fields outside every Roman city, the horror that was visible on the periphery of any given day. Jesus doesn't soften it into inspiration. He means *come and die*. Because it is only in that dying and the slow relinquishing of the life we grasp too tightly that we find the life we were made for. The one who saves his life loses it. The one who loses it for Christ's sake *finds it*.

This is an invitation into the strange economy of grace, where what looks like loss is, from another vantage point, the only way of gaining anything worth having. The soul is not for sale. Not for the whole world and not for anything the world can offer in exchange.



But this passage doesn't end in the shadow of the cross alone, it ends with glory: the Son of Man coming with his angels, coming in his Father's glory, coming in the nearness of the kingdom already breaking in. The cross and the crown aren't two separate stories—they make up one story, seen from two different distances.

FOR reflection

Where in your own life has love for someone or fear for yourself become a Peter-like resistance to the harder, truer way God is calling you to?

What would it look like this week to lose something small for Christ's sake and trust that this is how life is found?

Jesus doesn't rush past the suffering to get to the glory. Where might God be asking you to stay present to a hard thing just a little longer, rather than hurrying toward resolution?





SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b; Exodus 2:23-24; Ephesians 5:1-6

Friday

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b; Exodus 3:16-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Saturday

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b; Exodus 4:1-9; Matthew 8:14-17

Sunday

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b; Exodus 3:1-15; Jeremiah 15:15-21;
Psalm 26:1-8; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28

Monday

Psalm 83:1-4, 13-18; Exodus 4:10-31; Revelation 3:1-6

Tuesday

Psalm 83:1-4, 13-18; Exodus 5:1-6:13; Revelation 3:7-13

Wednesday

Psalm 83:1-4, 13-18; Exodus 7:14-25; Matthew 12:22-32

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

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:2

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 17)*

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

A Midday Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. *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

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy 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