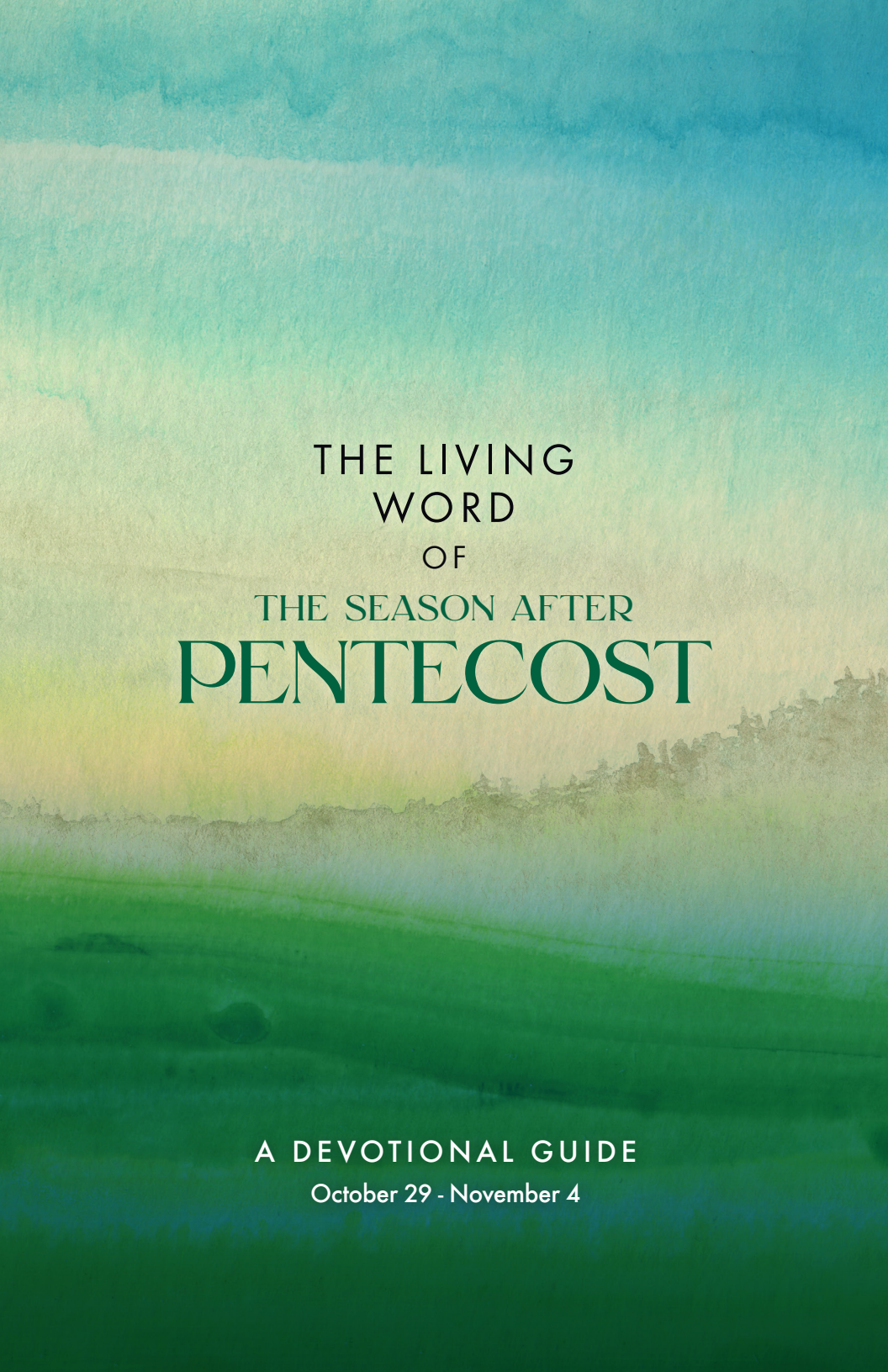

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
THE SEASON AFTER
PENTECOST
A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
October 29 - November 4

SEASON AFTER

PENTECOST

Proper 26

This week's Sunday Gospel text is Matthew 23:1-12. Jesus challenges the teachers of the Law who misuse the seat of Moses the Law-giver. That “seat” is their teaching authority.

Synagogues in Jesus’ day also had seats of honor reserved for esteemed rabbis or teachers of the Law of Moses. The seat Jesus describes could be physical or figurative. What is not in question is how the seat was intended to be used.

Jesus told the crowds and his disciples, “You must be careful to do everything they (the teachers of the Law and Pharisees) tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.” They used that privileged seat to exalt themselves rather than exalt the God to whom Moses’ Law points.

The reading from Micah 3:5-12 reveals the abuse of authority as an age-old problem: “As for the prophets who lead my people astray, they proclaim ‘peace’ if they have something to eat, but prepare to wage war against anyone who refuses to feed them. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money.”

You will notice a two-sided warning and encouragement in this week’s readings. The first side of that warning challenges those who presumptuously lead God’s people without obeying it themselves. In Romans 2:17-29, Paul says, “You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?”

That warning also comes through in 2 Peter 2:1-3, where Peter writes, “Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.”

These are stern warnings for leaders: Practice what you preach.

The second side of that warning is an encouraging, better picture of what godly leadership looks like. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13, “You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who



believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God."

Godly leadership is righteous, encouraging, and worthy of imitation. Still, Paul honors the Thessalonian church not just because they responded to the message's authority but because, in doing so, they showed respect for the word of God.

He writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe." Obedience to the word of God points beyond the messenger's authority to God's greater authority, the Giver of the word.

As you meditate on Scripture this week, consider Jesus' instruction to his disciples in Matthew 23:1-12: "Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah." Jesus turns our attention to himself.

Hebrews 3:1-6 tells us that Jesus is worthy of greater honor than Moses. He is our one Instructor, seated at the right hand of God. We must ultimately honor him.

Should we honor teachers, pastors, and preachers of the Word? Yes, but they are servants of King Jesus. Should we imitate them? Only if their pattern of life matches the Good News of Jesus.

Psalm 128 encourages us to be faithful: "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him."

FOR *reflection*

This week, ask yourself:
Do I honor God with my lips only while my heart is far from him?
Does the pattern of my life reveal my love for God?



SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday	Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37; Joshua 1:1-11; Romans 2:17-29
Friday	Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37; Joshua 2:1-14; 2 Peter 2:1-3
Saturday	Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37; Joshua 2:15-24; Matthew 23:13-28
Sunday	Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37; Joshua 3:7-17; Micah 3:5-12; Psalm 43; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13; Matthew 23:1-12
Monday	Psalm 128; Joshua 4:1-24; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20
Tuesday	Psalm 128; Joshua 6:1-16, 20; Acts 13:1-12
Wednesday	Psalm 128; Joshua 10:12-14; Matthew 15:1-9

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

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 19:14

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 26)*

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

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.

