

WEEK 5 BIBLE GUIDE

ENGAGING IN A GOD-SOAKED WORLD

As you spend time with this week's daily Bible excerpts, prayers, and spiritual exercises, we'd love to know where you are experiencing connection with Jesus.

Snap a photo or share a story of where you have been experiencing a God-soaked world.

We'll include snapshots of these stories and images as part of the visual art in the sanctuary.



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[#godsoakedworld | @reservoirchurch](https://instagram.com/reservoirchurch)

Monday, April 3 – Mark 5:21-43

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Points of Interest:

- Many of the most interesting stories Jesus’ biographers tell happen while he’s travelling around with his apprentices, and someone interesting comes his way. I don’t know if he was looking for these interruptions or if they came looking for him, but Jesus seems unusually present and prepared for these situations. In this case, when Jairus, the synagogue leader, finds Jesus and makes his desperate pleas for help, we simply read, “So he went with him.”
- It’s striking to see the leader of the synagogue begging at Jesus’ feet, much like the leper from last week. Unlike the leper, this wouldn’t be a familiar posture for this community pillar. His trust in Jesus’ capacity to help is high, and Jesus goes with him.
- Meanwhile, Mark focuses our attention on a single unnamed woman in the crowd. For twelve years, she’s had increasingly constant menstrual bleeding, something that can be caused by a number of medical

conditions, none of which were treatable by first century physicians. Apart from the decidedly difficult health and sanitation problems this woman would have dealt with, her condition would also have stigmatized her as ceremonially unclean in her religious culture – not fit for full acceptance in the worshipping community.

- While many of us find crowds challenging, I can see why crowds would have been particularly stressful for this woman, wondering when she would face embarrassment or have someone remind her of her ostracized state. You'd think Jesus would find the crowd stressful too, given that he's the center of attention and has somewhere to go, in a hurry. Jesus, though, is present and aware, so much so that he notices a single touch of his clothing from a stranger, and something that happens in his spirit when this occurs.
- Jesus' attention to this moment is strange to his disciples and frightening to the woman. Afraid of exposure or rejection, she's instead called Jesus' daughter, told that her faith has made her well, and that she can enjoy being healed in peace. She is physically, spiritually, and socially restored by Jesus.
- Mark, always loving a rapid pace of action, doesn't pause to let us enjoy this moment, but turns our attention from this healed daughter back to the dying one. As Jesus is speaking, messengers from Jairus' house arrive with the worst news a parent can receive – his daughter is dead.
- In this moment, Jesus says the craziest thing: "Do not fear, only believe." Later, when they arrive at Jairus' house, Jesus insists again that there isn't a problem. People should settle down, the girl is only asleep. Is Jairus' doctor incompetent? Is Jesus out of touch with reality? Both are possible, but unlikely. Rather, it seems that Jesus is reframing the whole situation. He has capacity to see settled calm even in an uproarious tragedy.
- By dismissing the crowd, Jesus creates an inside/out faith situation that's common in Mark's writing. The people that trust Jesus – his three closest apprentices, Jairus and his wife, see Jesus raise this daughter from the dead. The dismissive crowd misses that and assumes they misdiagnosed her death. Trust in Jesus opens up experience that grows further trust, while disinterest becomes self-confirming.
- Cheesy but true story: this passage was my one favorite Bible story as a kid, because I heard a record of a 1970s folks singer dramatize it. For your listening pleasure, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VknKAoxDil>

Prayer for our six – Pray that God would bring physical and spiritual help into the lives of any of your six who are chronically ill, or whose loved ones are sick or suffering. Pray that God would also protect them from isolation or despair.

Spiritual Exercise – This week our spiritual exercise will be a modified version of a spiritual practice called Immanuel Prayer. One of Jesus' nicknames, or titles, is Immanuel – Hebrew for "God with us." Immanuel prayer is a mode of praying in which we invite Jesus to help us perceive Jesus as with us in all things. Take a moment today to call to mind a place in your life where you are experiencing stress – either a recent stressful encounter, or something coming up in your day today that causes you stress. Call this situation to mind for a moment, thinking of what about it causes you stress. Then thank Jesus for being present and available in stressful situations. Ask Jesus to help you to perceive how Jesus is with you now in your stress. What does he bring to the scene that can help you "not fear, only believe"?

Tuesday, April 4 – Mark 8:22-26

²² They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?” ²⁴ And the man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” ²⁵ Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Then he sent him away to his home, saying, “Do not even go into the village.”

Points of Interest:

- Bethsaida was likely located along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee – it was a largely Jewish fishing village familiar to Jesus and his apprentices. Jesus’ reputation as a travelling teacher and healer would have been well established in this area.
- I’m struck for the first time by a small detail. When the blind man’s friends or family or neighbors take him to Jesus, the first thing Jesus does is take his hand and walk him out of the village.

Partly, Jesus has his own reputation to consider. The gospel of Mark spends its first eight chapters pretty systematically developing the idea that Jesus is the Messiah, or the Christ – a Hebrew title for the promised messenger of God who will lead God’s people back to glory. He’s the leader they’ve been hoping for, and just after this passage, in a climactic moment in this section of Mark, Jesus’ apprentice Peter will say this too. But as much as Mark develops this claim, Jesus doesn’t seem to want anyone to know. He’s constantly trying to avoid acclaim, perhaps because he’s aware of just how different he is from the expectations most people had of this awaited ruler. As much as Jesus is Messiah, he’s also counter-Messiah. He’s God’s messenger, for sure, but not the one people have been hoping for. So Jesus keeps doing his best to operate in private.

I’ve got to think, though, that Jesus is also being considerate of this blind man. The sound and attention of this crowd was likely intimidating, and Jesus gently offers his hand and walks him away from a scene of spectacle. At the end of this encounter, perhaps again for both these reasons, Jesus sends the man home, way from what would have been a curious crowd downtown.

- Regardless of Jesus’ intentions, this attention and touch must have been a good feeling for the blind man. I even think Jesus’ earthy touch of rubbing his own saliva onto the man’s eyelids might have been more welcome than creepy.
- Saliva was believed to have medicinal properties by those in the first century Mediterranean world and was associated with healing. So it’s interesting that Jesus used a means for healing that was expected in his culture. Today this scene might look like Jesus walking this man to a local clinic and paying his co-pay for him.

- The two-phase healing of this scene is striking and unique in the memoirs of Jesus' life. Is this just the way it worked that time? Was it kindness to this man to adjust to his new sight in phases? Both of those, or something else entirely? We don't know. The line about him first seeing people looking like walking trees is certainly poetic.
- In the end, the man sees great. There's a triple emphasis in the penultimate verse – he looked intently, his sight was restored, and he saw clearly.

Prayer for your region – I'm gripped by the half-way sight of the man after Jesus' first touch. For me, this image of hazy sight has been a rich metaphor. Consider any ways that people and culture in your region have been touched by Jesus, but in a way that has left only a hazy rather than fully clear and good impact. I think, for instance, of the nostalgia and spirituality that white-steeple churches evoke in New England – lovely, but something short of Jesus' full healing power. Or misunderstandings or half-understandings people have of Jesus may come to mind. Pray that Jesus would restore full spiritual sight to many in your region, that people would look intently at the life and words and good news of Jesus and see clearly.

Spiritual Exercise – This week our spiritual exercise will be a modified version of a spiritual practice called Immanuel Prayer. One of Jesus' nicknames, or titles, is Immanuel – Hebrew for "God with us." Immanuel prayer is a mode of praying in which we invite Jesus to help us perceive Jesus as with us in all things. Take a moment today to call to mind a place in your life where you lack clarity – perhaps you are utterly confused, or perhaps you can see the way forward, but only in a hazy light. Call this situation to mind for a moment, thinking of what clarity of vision you wish you had. Then thank Jesus for being present and available in confusing situations. Ask Jesus to help you to "see everything clearly." What comes to mind as you do that?

Wednesday, April 5– John 4:7-26

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” ¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” ¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” ¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Points of Interest:

- John’s memoirs indicate Jesus deliberately travelled through Samaria, even though Jews would usually travel around this region. Avoiding neighborhoods people we know think ill of is pretty familiar practice still. Not to Jesus, though, at least not in this case.
- There are multiple barriers of distance Jesus steps up to in this encounter. Men generally didn’t socially interact with non-related women in this kind of way and certainly didn’t engage in this kind of respectful, intellectual, and spiritual discourse like Jesus does here. As the passage points out, Jews also didn’t associate with Samaritans. Samaritans and Jews told different stories of Samaritans’ origins, but both groups acknowledge some shared culture and ancestry as well as significant differences. These differences had largely become points of tension and resentment over the years.
- To most of us, this feels like a split-level conversation. The woman is speaking on a more day-to-day, literal level, while Jesus is trying to take the conversation somewhere deeper. At first, she doesn’t quite catch his meaning, or at least doesn’t engage with it.
- The conversation takes a turn when Jesus asks for her husband. This, by the way, wouldn’t have been an unexpected or rude question. A man in Jesus’ culture wouldn’t have this kind of conversation with any woman, certainly not a stranger, and would at least expect her husband to be present if he were to

continue.

Based on Jesus' rather detailed knowledge of this woman's personal life, he seems to have something else in mind. Typically, commentators – largely men – have read Jesus as exposing her shame, only to communicate that he accepts her despite her checkered past and sinful present. Much more likely is that Jesus is gently exposing her vulnerability. Women didn't initiate divorces in this time and place and didn't dictate the terms of their relationships with men in general. So this woman has had five husbands die or abandon her and another take her into his home without offering the dignity and protection of marriage. Whatever shame this woman has or hasn't experienced, she has had a hard life.

- Jesus' reaction to her life is to treat her as a desert, not a toxin. He sees the water being drawn from the well and offers her satisfaction and refreshment and life – all that water can do and more. Jesus says that he is her well, he is her reservoir.
- Jesus also offers this much-maligned Samaritan woman inclusion in a community of worship. This might sound technical or abstract to us, but it might be the most radical thing Jesus does. All women were ancillary to Jewish worship at best – they were not allowed in the more important areas of the temple in Jerusalem. And Jews also saw all Samaritans as terribly misguided in their religious views and worship practices.

When the woman steers Jesus toward this classically contentious topic – to change the subject? to provoke him? out of genuine curiosity? – Jesus takes the Jewish position in the debate, but says that in the end, God isn't going to care. God wants people who can love and praise him in any culture, on any geography, in true and valid terms. This again is the New Covenant spirituality we've explored in this season. It's personal and heartfelt connection – in this case worship: love, surrender, reverence – with the true and living God for all people, in all circumstances.

- Amongst Jews in Mark's account, Jesus avoided this Messianic label, given all the misunderstandings with which it was fraught. Here in Samaria, he embraces it. He is the one who will continue to proclaim all things, just as he is doing now.

Prayer for our six – If any of your six have had particularly hard lives, pray that they will find a listening ear and acceptance for their story. If any of them have spiritual questions, pray that they will find answers from God and invitation to participate in this New Covenant spiritual worship.

Spiritual Exercise – This week our spiritual exercise will be a modified version of a spiritual practice called Immanuel Prayer. One of Jesus' nicknames, or titles, is Immanuel – Hebrew for "God with us." Immanuel prayer is a mode of praying in which we invite Jesus to help us perceive Jesus as with us in all things. Take a moment today to call to mind a place in your life where you are thirsty, unsatisfied, or unfulfilled. Call this area to mind, including how you might experience it this day. Then thank Jesus for being present and available to you in this, knowing everything about you. Ask Jesus to help you perceive how the water he can "give you will become in you a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." What is Jesus speaking to you in this promise?

Thursday, April 6– Matthew 26:36-46

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” ⁴⁰ Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² Again he went away for the second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” ⁴³ Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

Points of Interest:

- All four of the Bible’s biographies of Jesus give considerable time and space to the final days before Jesus’ death, a week in a which he was in the big city of Jerusalem for the Passover feast and had been teaching his apprentices, interacting with large crowds, and embroiled in tense encounters with the city’s cultural and religious elite. All four of the biographies – also called *gospels*, literally “good news” – also mention this mountain side garden, tucked in near olive groves, where Jesus was arrested. This was an actual garden that any more local readers of these original texts could visit themselves and imagined what had occurred on this fateful evening.
- When last we met James and John (the two sons of Zebedee) in this guide, they were arguing over who was the greatest amongst Jesus’ apprentices and conspiring to grab the top two spots. Now Jesus is looking to them for emotional support and friendship, and it goes about as well as we’d expect it to.
- The language here leaves no doubt as to what this night was like for Jesus. He is grieved, agitated, and deeply grieved even to death, we’re told. Few sleepless nights have been quite this restless and agonizing.
- Jesus tells his friends to stay awake not just for his sake, but for theirs. They are facing a time of trial as well, though they don’t see it yet. Perhaps the trial is whether or not they can stay awake and be loyal and true friends to Jesus. More likely, it is the trial they will experience when their friend and teacher is arrested, tried and murdered as an enemy of the state of Rome. How would most of us react if our closest mentor and friend was disowned by whatever spiritual community we are part of and arrested by the state for terrorism? I know that such a trial would expose me pretty deeply as well.
- The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Thinking of pretty much any good intention or temptation, I say, “Truer words were never said, Jesus.” This could make us discouraged, as this is a pretty discouraging phenomenon. I think there are two more helpful ways to take this line, though. One is to accept our weakness of flesh with less self-judgment and shame. God understands our weaknesses and we needn’t endlessly deride ourselves for them. The other is to for greater power of spirit for where we need it. This access to divine help is a considerable part of the experience of Jesus’ God-soaked New Covenant spirituality he’s teaching us after all.

- Jesus' prayer is for this cup to pass from him without him drinking it. This image of a cup of suffering is the same one Jesus referred to when James and John were negotiating for power as Jesus' right-hand guys. Just as Jesus told them that the path to spiritual greatness would travel through great suffering, he senses great, impending suffering of his own that he doesn't think he can bear. Usually, readers have assumed that Jesus is expecting his upcoming torture and death and would rather avoid it, even though it is central to his destiny. In this reading, which may well be accurate, Jesus' prayer is heard by God but isn't answered as he hoped it would be. An alternate reading is that Jesus is willing to suffer and die, but though he hopes to live again, is afraid that death will be the end. In this reading, though Jesus suffers, his prayer is heard and answered in the affirmative. Probably the stakes of how we read this are low, but I think it's interesting to try to imagine the various ways Jesus may have experience fear and grief on this night.
- In Jesus' own angst-ridden prayer, he makes a strong statement of his preference, and also offers submission to will and preference of God. It seems that praying with only half of this prayer is shallow. Praying our own desires without a desire to yield to God's wishes seems flippant. But telling God we simply want what God wants without engaging our own desires seems dishonest. Jesus does both here, which seems to be a good model for increasing our own connection to both God and self.
- At end, Jesus seems so disappointed and sad. He's disappointed in his sleepy and weak friends, disappointed in the associate who betrays him, and sadly resigned to the betrayal which is about to occur. This moment reminds me that this phrase Son of Man can be a title for God's designated ruler but also a phrase that means "human" or "everyman." Jesus tasted the full range of human experience that we do, even the worst parts.

Prayer for your city – Somewhere in your city right now, there are gardens and bedrooms and classrooms and boardrooms where people are lonely, sad, and afraid. Pray that God will be these folks' comfort, will answer their prayers spoken and unspoken, and will bring a true friend to their sides.

Spiritual Exercise – This week our spiritual exercise will be a modified version of a spiritual practice called Immanuel Prayer. One of Jesus' nicknames, or titles, is Immanuel – Hebrew for "God with us." Immanuel prayer is a mode of praying in which we invite Jesus to help us perceive Jesus as with us in all things. Take a moment today to call to mind a place in your life where your future looks bleak. Call this area to mind for a moment, thinking of what about it causes you fear or distress. Then thank Jesus for being present and available in all things, having experienced distress himself. Ask Jesus to help you to perceive how Jesus is with you now in your fear, how he is not asleep or inattentive. What comfort, strength, or help can the Spirit of God bring to you today? And ask Jesus if you like what the will of God might look like for you in this area.

Friday, April 7– John 19:17-19, 23-30

¹⁷ and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ... ²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. ²⁴ So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.” This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

“They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.”

²⁵ And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

²⁸ After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Points of Interest:

- The next day Jesus’ execution takes place on a hillside or mountainside location known as Golgotha. The Latin name for this place is where the English name sometimes used, Calvary, comes from. There’s debate around the reason for this name. It could be because of the skull-like shape of the hill, because it was near a graveyard, or because it might have been a place of frequent executions. Regardless, it again roots this scene both in a specific geography and a rather gothic-feeling mood.
- I’m not sure what I can say about crucifixion that hasn’t been said many times in many places. Wikipedia’s entry on the subject (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion>) is actually – as of today – pretty thorough and well done. The Romans didn’t invent crucifixion, but they certainly ended up popularizing it. Given their penchant for detail, the Romans may also have perfected crucifixion as a method of public shame, torture, and state execution. The victim would often carry a crossbeam of up to a hundred pounds to the execution site, and then be left hanging naked to die of asphyxiation when he no longer had strength to hoist himself up to breathe. It was a gruesome form of torture and intimidation.
- For the sake of space, I cut some of the verses in which the Roman governor Pilate and Jerusalem’s religious leaders quibble over the sign Pilate had made, likely to mock the Jewish authorities who turned Jesus over to the Roman military.
- John takes a surprising amount of time on the detail of Jesus’ clothes and on the soldiers’ behavior. Partly this speaks to the sense of geographic and spiritual place of this scene. John and his fellow biographers are

constantly telling us both where things happened and that they happened consistent with previous scriptures' expectations for how these things would go. Here the quotation about the clothing is lifted from Psalm 22 – an old poem of someone's unjust suffering and eventual vindication by God that other biographers say was very much on Jesus' mind as he was killed.

Beyond this, Jesus' biographers give us these vivid details because they help us picture and imagine how these events occurred. This is what it was like, and this is what it's like still when you are executed by armed agents of the state, however innocent you may be. Your murderers might do stuff like mock your family and culture, or take your possessions for themselves.

- Also, in these tragic moments in life, so often we find there are women waiting, and women grieving, and women suffering. Here too that's the case. Three women, coincidentally all named Mary, are there at the scene, grieving the loss of their son and nephew and mentor and friend.
- Even as he's dying, Jesus looks to the need of his mother Mary, and the need of the disciple mentioned as well. Likely this disciple is John, who likely didn't actually write this account which is named after him but is the primary voice behind it, whoever actually published it in the generation following his life.

Jesus' mother has lost a son, and Jesus' disciple has lost part of his purpose for life. Jesus offers them to one another, giving his mother an heir to care for her in her old age, and giving his disciple an important role.

- Jesus' words "I am thirsty" say a lot at once. Thirst is an obvious byproduct of hanging out in the sun to die. The words are also a nod to another old scripture, another psalm of suffering, in this case Psalm 69. And there is perhaps an ironic connection to the scene from earlier in John with the Samaritan woman. There Jesus offers himself as living water to a woman of great thirst. Here Jesus thirsts himself and all people can offer is a sponge full of old, sour wine.
- Jesus' final words are, "It is finished." His work is finished, his life is finished – maybe both. Jesus' time on the cross is actually relatively short compared to many crucifixions, which could go on for hours and hours. Jesus seems to both surrender to the moment, and exude a sense of control over his fate even to the end.

Prayer for your world – Jesus' torture, suffering, and death was part of his means to reveal a God who suffers with us, to open up a path to intimate connection with God, to bring Jesus into death so he could overcome and defeat it from the inside, and to end once and for all a spiritually ineffective mode of scapegoating and sacrifice that didn't bring life. Most torture and suffering, including all-too-frequent state-sponsored torture and suffering and death, does none of these things. Pray that God would bring peace to our earth and an end to these practices, and that people who follow Jesus would take the lead in effecting this change.

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Saturday, April 8 – John 21:1-14

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Points of Interest:

- Since we last left Jesus, dying on the cross, he has been buried in a tomb that days later is found empty by some of his apprentices and friends. Jesus has also appeared to some of them, offering them proof of his back-from-the-dead life and peace. But the encounters seem brief and maybe, from the perspective of Jesus’ friends, hard to believe.
- Since then, some of Jesus’ formerly-fishermen apprentices have also tried to move on with life. In Peter’s words, “I am going fishing,” we can hear a return to his old profession but also maybe a resignation that his days as travelling apprentice of Jesus may be gone for good as well.
- I read John’s words, “That night they caught nothing,” as similarly both literal and figurative. Peter and friends have a bad night of fruitless labor, probably not the first time they’ve pulled up empty nets, but discouraging nevertheless. But it’s also maybe an indication or a symbol of a broader and deeper emptiness.
- Jesus shows up on the shore with comically ridiculous advice. To a group of professional fishermen, he yells across the lake, “Hey fellas, throw your net on the *other* side of the boat!” It’s kind of a chump move... except that in this case, it works.

- I love that from a distance, the first way Peter recognizes Jesus isn't by sight and isn't by the sound of his voice. Instead, Peter recognizes Jesus in the surprisingly effective results of his words, in the abundance that comes when Jesus is around and when Jesus has something to say.
- So Peter is fishing in his underwear and then puts on clothes to jump into the water. Likely this sounds both creepy and weird to you, but it wouldn't have to Peter and friends, I don't think. The point here is Peter's enthusiasm and joy, not his problem figuring out how to keep his clothing dry.
- Again, for someone writing on a papyrus scroll and short on space, the details are great here. Jesus lights a charcoal fire while waiting on the beach alone, someone takes the time to count the 153 fish hauled in the net, and Jesus tells his old apprentices, "Come and have breakfast."
- Jesus takes bread and gives it to them and does the same with some freshly grilled fish. This is familiar language in John that evokes earlier scenes where Jesus passed out bread and fish, both to his students and to hungry crowds. Jesus always liked to eat with people and he assures his friends that he still does.

Prayer for our six – Pray that any of your six who are finding their work mundane or discouraging would experience wonder, surprise, and abundance in their work. As a bonus, if you like pray that Jesus would give some of your six an experience that helps them believe that Jesus is alive and wants to eat with them.

Spiritual Exercise – This week our spiritual exercise will be a modified version of a spiritual practice called Immanuel Prayer. One of Jesus' nicknames, or titles, is Immanuel – Hebrew for "God with us." Immanuel prayer is a mode of praying in which we invite Jesus to help us perceive Jesus as with us in all things. Take a moment today to call to mind a meal – one you recently ate, or one you expect to eat today. Picture the food you are eating, the people you are with. Call this situation to mind for a moment, paying attention to whatever you notice or feel. Then thank Jesus for being present with you in each meal. Ask Jesus to help you to perceive where Jesus is and what he is saying to you. How does it feel that Jesus wants to eat with you?

Sunday, April 9 – *Selah* (Review)

Taking our cue from the Psalms' interlude moments of rest and meditation, we are practicing a weekly pause in our Bible guide. Each Sunday, we won't introduce a new passage but will pause for reflection and review.

One way you can use this pause is for catch up. If you missed a day or more of the guide this week, you can look at one other day's passage and enjoy it out of sequence.

A second way you can use this pause is to review one of the passages you especially enjoyed or that especially troubled you. Read it and the points of interest a second time, asking God to teach you something new and illumine something God would like you to notice. Try the spiritual exercise again and see where it takes you.

A final way you can use this pause is to touch base on the 40 Days of Faith experiment as a whole. Consider these prompts to do so.

1. How has it gone praying every day for God to do something for you? Has anything changed in your prayer, or in answer to your prayer?

2. What has it been like to pray for your six? Consider re-writing the six names below, or re-committing to prayer for six local people who seem to not be experiencing much from God. Have you seen anything happen – either in you or in their lives – in response to your prayers? Is there anything you would like to say to any of them?

3. How have you experienced God's goodness so far? Did any of Jesus' words particularly speak to you this week? Have you learned anything about God, or seen any ways in which you live in a God-soaked world? Have you noticed anything that helps you engage with God's presence with you?

Take a few minutes of silence with these questions, and see where they take you today. Close your time by thanking God for anything you notice, learn, or experience.