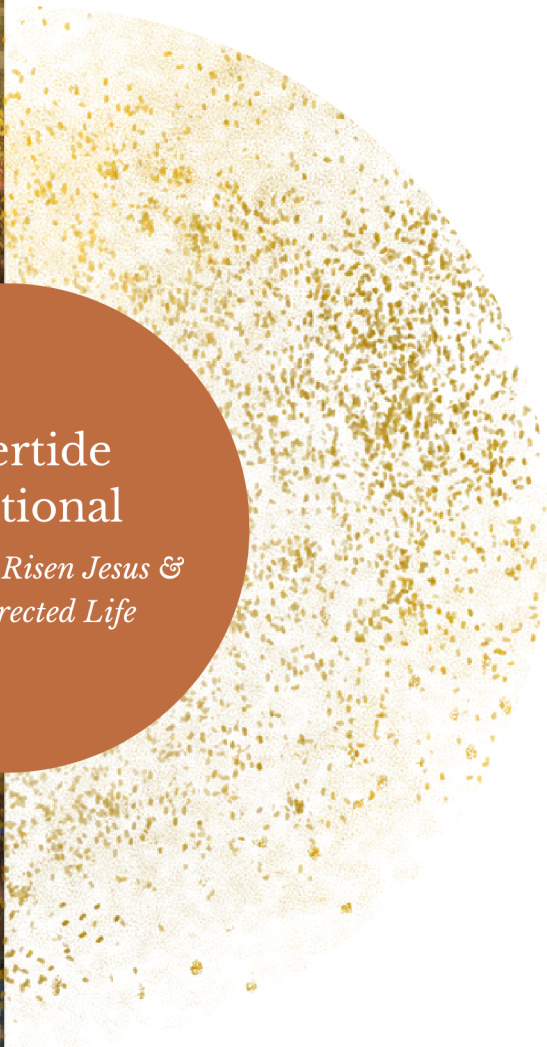


Eastertide Devotional

*Pursuing the Risen Jesus &
the Resurrected Life*



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Scripture quotations are taken from the following sources:

New International Version. (2011). BibleGateway.com.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/#booklist>

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Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Tyndale House Publishers (Original work published 1996).

Eastertide Devotional

Pursuing the Risen Jesus & the Resurrected Life

Eastertide is a term that simply describes the season after Easter. It is traditionally a fifty day period where the church focuses their attention on the themes and accounts of the resurrection. The purpose of this devotional is to help us deepen our understanding of the miracle of the resurrection and what it means to live a resurrected life. We want to allow the reality of the resurrection to sink deeply into our bones and permeate our days far beyond our celebration on Easter Sunday.

This devotional is a collaborative effort from members of the Tempe Church community and the reflections, questions, and invitations are designed to be a gift to readers and the risen Jesus who captures our hearts more each day.

How to use this devotional:

Each week is centered around an aspect of the resurrection. Each week includes five reflections from scripture, a day to prayerfully contemplate the previous week with God, and the opportunity to embrace a day of rest. We encourage you to read at your own pace and feel free to work through multiple devotionals a day or skip a day. Next to each day's scripture focus, you will find prompts to encourage you to read and sit with the passage in different ways. These prompts are designed to help you listen to scripture more deeply.

As we begin our journey with the risen Jesus, we want to ask for his presence with us...

Jesus,

We wonder what it was like to know you before the cross, and then to encounter you after the resurrection. We have lived on this side of your rising our whole lives and maybe sometimes we miss the miracle of it.

As we read again the stories of your first followers, those whose dreams seemed to die at the cross but were made alive again in a whole new way after your resurrection, will you help us enter into the miracle of your story? Will you help us dream with you?

What does it mean for us today to live in the power of your resurrection? We are pretty good at hanging onto the hope that someday, even though our physical bodies will die, you will give us new incorruptible ones. But what can we know about a resurrected life now? What can we learn about your presence among us today?

Holy Spirit, teach us as we read and ponder and imagine. Help us to be disciplined to do the slow work of learning and listening to you. Teach us how to live!

Amen!



Encounters
with the
Risen Jesus
week one

Reading Matthew 28:1-10

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. **4** The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **6** He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **9** Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (NIV)

Reflection

How many times have I read this passage? How many times have I recounted the angel's abrupt arrival that sparked fear in the women and the guards? I was always struck, pun intended, by the sensory grandeur and chaos of the moment. A flash of lightning. The groaning rumble of the ground. A harsh, white, glowing humanoid. What I did not notice in this passage was how quietly Jesus appeared in the scene. The risen Jesus in his once dead now alive and breathing body announced his presence with a simple "Greetings." Why isn't Jesus' first appearance after rising from the dead more flashy and groundbreaking than an angel descending from heaven?

In rebirth as in birth, Jesus' origins are humble. The angel appeared in a violent rumble and blinding flash while Jesus "suddenly" appeared with a "hello" on his lips while his friends rushed to spread the good news. Why did Jesus appear to the women? They were already in route to fulfill their purpose as messengers of the good news of Jesus' resurrection. What was Jesus' intent when he revealed himself?

I wonder if Jesus appeared because the women were "afraid yet filled with joy." It is their fear that Jesus directly addressed when he spoke to them. "Do not be afraid." If the purpose of the angelic encounter was to spur the women to spread the word, it was successful. But Jesus chose to intervene and calm their fear. Did he want the women to accomplish their task with only joy, free from fear? In rebirth, the women encounter a Jesus who is remarkably still the gracious, compassionate, and loving friend that he was in his first life. Even after embracing unimaginable suffering and the worst of life's cruelty, Jesus is still the same Jesus. That might be more miraculous than rising from the dead. To remain soft, to remain loving, to remain present in a world that rejected you, is incredibly difficult for our hearts that want to be protected and feel safe. Jesus' scars only deepen his connection to us. This realization leaves me more in awe of Jesus and more aware that he invites us into a resurrection that is more than skin deep. Our hearts too can be raised from the deadly sting of rejection, hatred, violence, and fear.

While Reading...**1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**

If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER

What are some words or phrases that stand out to you as you read this passage?

3 PAUSE AND PRAY

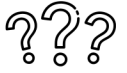
Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.



Questions to Consider with God

What does Jesus say to you when he steps into your life?

How is he inviting you to experience resurrection in the deepest parts of your heart?



“Go and tell!”

(Is Jesus prompting you to speak with someone about him?)

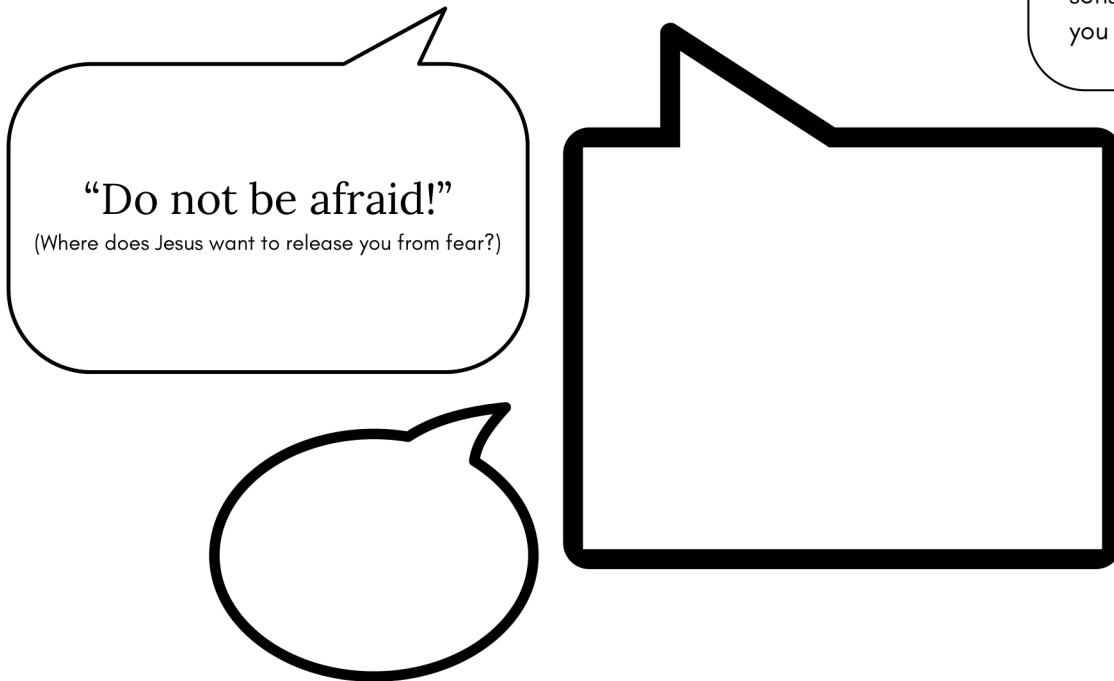
What is Jesus *saying* to you?

“Do not be afraid!”

(Where does Jesus want to release you from fear?)

Creative Reflection

Using the speech bubbles, write the words or phrases that you hear Jesus speaking to you in this season of life. Use colored pencils, markers, or crayons to express the emotions and sensations that you feel when you hear these words from Jesus.



Reading John 20:11-18

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb **12** and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. **13** They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." **14** At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." **16** Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" **18** Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. (NIV)

Reflection

What will come of Mary? What will come of this young woman whose life has taken an unexpected, miraculous turn from being a demon-possessed outcast to a beloved and devoted follower and friend of Jesus? Jesus, the one who fully saw and loved Mary is gone. Dead. Crucified on a Cross in front of all and buried. And now, Mary is denied one final time to see and care for her friend, for her Rabbi. She's filled with shock, anger, and deep sadness. Grief overwhelms her and she begins to sob. How could the Romans be so cruel as to take her friend and not allow this last anointing? This last gift, this last moment of tenderness stripped away from her and from the body of the deceased. The indignity.

"Woman, why are you crying?" A simple but heavy question. I imagine a thousand answers racing through Mary's mind. Why am I crying? Because they've taken his body. Why am I crying? Because they murdered him. Why am I crying? Because the life I anticipated is no more. Why am I crying? Because my friend, my Rabbi, is gone. Why am I crying, WHY AM I CRYING? The one we waited for is gone. There is no one here.

She turns away from these two strange men, dejected, frustrated, about to leave, only to be asked again by another, "Woman, why are you crying?" She turns heavily and sees a man who appears to be a gardener. In desperation she pleads with him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." With a single word, a breath of life, Jesus speaks her name, "Mary".

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:18)

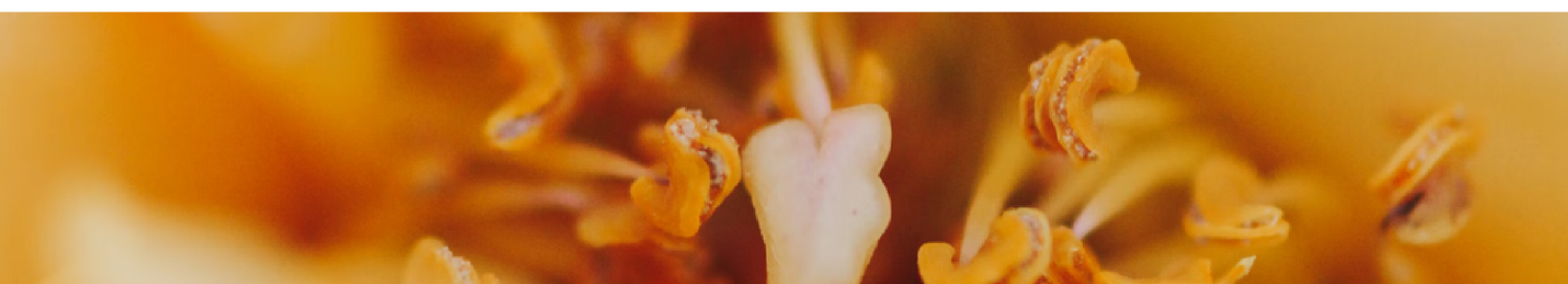
In a moment reminiscent of Genesis 3, Jesus, the Messiah, had returned from the dead and God walked in the garden again as it was in the first days of Creation. The miracle of the Gardener's resurrection reverberated through Creation; life had begun again and nothing would ever be the same. The One we've all waited for and desperately hoped for has returned and has spoken our name: "Mary".

While Reading...

1 PICTURE THE SCENE
What are the sights, sounds, smells, textures that surround you when you envision yourself in this scene?

2 READ THE PASSAGE AGAIN
Read the passage again while immersing yourself in the scene.

3 BECOME MARY
Place yourself in Mary's experience. What is it like to be her in this moment?



“On the third day the friends of Christ coming at day-break to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realized the new wonder; the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of a gardener God walked again in the garden, not in the cool of the evening, but in the dawn.” **G.K. Chesterton**

“



Creative Reflection

As you look upon this Image of Jesus and Mary meeting in the garden, What emotions, thoughts or questions stir in you? Gently offer these reactions to Jesus.

How do you think Mary felt to hear her name being spoken by Jesus? What emotions or thoughts or questions might have risen up in her?

Now as you observe the image ask Jesus to speak your name. Maybe Jesus will speak through another image, a memory, or a feeling; allow yourself an openness to however Jesus chooses to interact with you.

What does Jesus' call stir in you?

Like Mary, we often have ideas of how we anticipate God to be or act. She went looking for a dead man when Jesus was walking and alive. She needed Jesus to shift her perspective in order to see him. How might God be inviting us into seeing Jesus as the Resurrected King?

Reading Luke 24:13-24; 28-34

13 That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. **14** As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. **15** As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. **16** But God kept them from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. **18** Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days." **19** "What things?" Jesus asked. "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. **20** But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. **21** We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. **22** "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. **23** They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! **24** Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."

28 By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, **29** but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. **30** As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. **31** Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! **32** They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" **33** And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, **34** who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter." (NLT)

Reflection

The despair we carry often distorts our perception of what is possible.
 For these grief-stricken apprentices of Jesus, resurrection was not even on their radar.
 The story from the women who had been to the tomb sounded like nonsense.
 The angels must have been a hallucination.
 The empty tomb just meant someone had stolen his body.

It's hard to blame them, really. They had desperately wanted to believe that Jesus was the One they had been waiting for, the Messiah who would rescue Israel from their oppressors and set up a new kingdom. But in less than a week his coronation parade had become a trial, a conviction, a scourging, and then the cross. Here it was the third day since his death (maybe someone had said something about a third day, but who could remember?) and for the two disciples from Emmaus, it felt like they might as well go home. Passover music and dancing and feasting had stopped. The annual festival had ended in grief rather than a celebration of redemption.

I love that Jesus joined these two and walked beside them in their grief. He listened to the deep disappointments of their hearts. He let them be honest about their sadness and inability to hold onto the hope their friends seemed to believe in.

While Reading...

- 1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**
If you are able, read the passage out loud.
- 2 CONSIDER**
What are some key moments or expressions that stand out to you as you read this passage?
- 3 PAUSE AND PRAY**
Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.



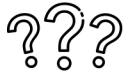
And then Jesus spoke truth into their pain. Sometimes we need a friend to cry with us, and other times we need someone who sees what is true much better than we do to walk with us and speak truth. There must have been a lot of people wondering about Jesus that afternoon, but Jesus chose to spend a few hours on a dirt road between Jerusalem and Emmaus with two people he really loved who needed to hear his voice before they even recognized it. What a friend.

Yet, as beautiful as a conversation with a trusted friend can be, sometimes deep healing happens best around a table. We don't know for sure what it was that opened the eyes of these two disciples to recognize Jesus when he broke the bread and gave it to them. Surely they had seen him break bread in the past. We know they were friends with the twelve apostles. Had they heard how just days before when Jesus distributed the broken bread around the table he said, "This is my body, given for you"? In the giving of his life, had Jesus carried their grief and then given them eyes to be first-day witnesses of his resurrection? As their hearts skipped a beat, did they begin to perceive the reality that with God, the unfathomable was actually possible?

Questions to Consider with God

Where is fear or grief keeping you from believing in an impossible solution?

How does the reality of the resurrection of Jesus help you believe that with God, anything truly is possible?



The Pilgrims of Emmaus on the Road by James Tissot

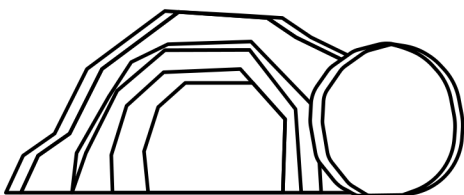
I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 1:19-20, NLT

Creative Reflection

Go for a walk and listen to an audio version of the words of Jesus on your earbuds/headphones. Imagine what it would have been like to walk with your friend and listen to the resurrected Jesus speaking truth to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to stir your heart as you listen to his words.

Where is fear or grief making it impossible to imagine a solution to something you are going through? Imagine your difficulty in the tomb, and then write it somewhere outside of the tomb below. Ask God to help you know the power of the resurrection and to give you hope that God can do the impossible in your life.



Reading Luke 24: 35-48

35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. **36** While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." **37** They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. **38** He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? **39** Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. **41** And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate it in their presence.

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." **45** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. **46** He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. (NIV)

Reflection

Bread is a revelation. And the Body in that bread is always speaking.

The Gospels depict the resurrection in astonishing ways, and the significance of food is chief among them. In the breaking of bread before the crucifixion, Jesus says, "This is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). And we struggle to understand what we do not yet see. But in this moment of the resurrection life, Jesus returns to us, asking for food. Do you have anything here to eat? The God of all life, all existence, all sustenance, and all being, comes to his creation and asks for a bit of nourishment. He takes a piece of broiled fish and eats. How can this be? And what can it mean?

In one manner, the eating is a proof, of course, a gentle concession to the slow belief of his followers, in the presence of what they never imagined could be. From the center of our grief, in the waking of that first breath we call hope, what we and the disciples must realize is the long arc of the Incarnation, how it curves, like a rainbow of light made visible, through Crucifixion and into the Resurrection—not only of spirit but of body. The God who entered his creation as Word become flesh, born of a woman's body, crying for milk, the God who thirsted from the cross where he drew the last breath of a body now reborn, comes to eat, and live, and love in the midst of us, as one of us. The life of resurrection, of new creation, is a life of spirit and of bodies, of endless embodiments that join the two.

In his own body, Jesus bears the wounds of the cross. He carries them into new life. And his invitation to see and touch his hands and feet is more than an offering of evidence. It is a call to look into the body we now live and move in—his body—to see the new work that he is doing there and in us, in all our old wounds. If we look far enough, we can see into the deep of time to that first and deepest injury, the wound that came in the Garden, when we chose the wrong food, the fruit from the wrong tree, and what was whole—spirit and body—broke into the fractured echoes we call the Fall. Jesus comes now, in a different kind of breaking, after the breaking of bread, the sharing of a different food, and says, "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:36). The Greek word for peace is *eirene*, and its sense is that of harmony among parts. And so our Lord speaks peace as a blessing and command. Through the revelation of his risen body, that ancient striving between spirit and flesh is finally laid to rest. God is doing something new in the world and in us. Spirit and body, every color of creation, is grafted into the arc that bends toward the risen life.

While Reading...**1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**

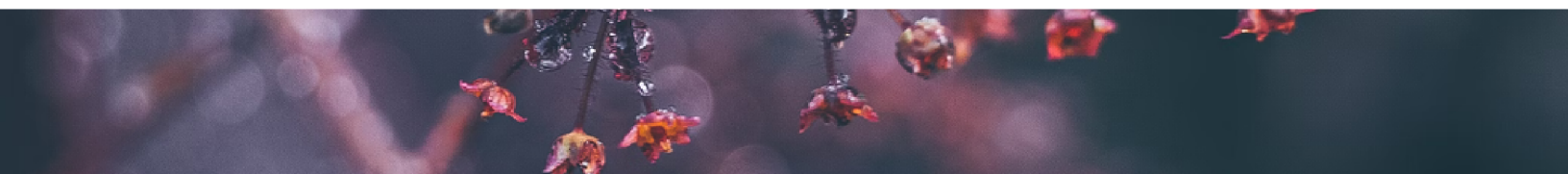
If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER

What are some key moments or expressions that stand out to you as you read this passage?

3 PAUSE AND PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.



Do you have anything here to eat? This too is an invitation. From the midst of new life, unexpected and unlooked for, God beckons to us. We, like trembling children, shaking from the trauma of that old forbidden fruit, struggle to understand how any food can be holy, how we can possibly offer a gift to the Holy One. But God asks. He asks for our time, our talents, our art, our griefs and our sufferings, our hopes and our joys. He asks for all we create and all we carry, saying, "Trust me, try me, give me something to eat, and I will show you how real I am. You no longer need to fear the Garden or the fruit that wounded you. We are growing something new together now. Nor are you barred from the Tree of Life. I am that tree. And you will bear my fruit throughout the world.

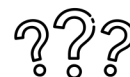
Questions to Consider with God

How has Jesus revealed himself to you in the breaking of bread you share with others?

Where in your daily walk with Jesus do you feel the need or desire to see and touch his hands and feet, to experience his resurrected body through your senses? What might God be inviting or offering to you in those moments?

In what ways can the resurrection bring peace into your life? How can you embody that peace for the world?

Today, use your talents and your time in a creative way to worship God or help someone in need. Wait, watch, look, and listen for what God reveals to you through that offering.



Creative Reflection

How do you encounter the risen Jesus through your senses? Use the space below to describe your interactions through sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.



Reading John 20:24-31

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **27** Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **31** But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (NIV)

Reflection

Let's begin with a word association game. When you think of each of the disciples, what is the first word that comes to your mind? Peter... Andrew... James and John... Judas... Thomas... ? Perhaps that last one would score highest on "most answers in common." Survey says: Doubt.

John tells the story that leads us to this misnomer. The disciples gather around a table behind a locked door. Breaking bread and piecing together memories and dashed hopes. Where is Thomas? The next person through the door is not the Twin. It is Jesus! We have seen the Lord! When Thomas arrives, he is understandably skeptical. "Unless I feel the wounds..." So Jesus lets him. He has seen the Lord. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Which often leads to an unfortunate retelling of the story. Blessed are those who believe without proof. But that's not what Jesus said or how he behaved.

So let's redeem Thomas's good name and perhaps redeem our own story in the process.

Thomas has shown himself to be pretty sharp, pragmatic, even courageous. Notice he is the one moving about while the rest are locked away behind closed doors.

John 11:16 "Then Thomas (the one called Didymus) said to the other disciples, "Let us go too so that we may die with Jesus."
John 14:5 "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Thomas doesn't seem to lack the ability to believe - he just needs a good reason, something believable. Perhaps he simply can't believe that the disciples would still be hiding if they believed Jesus was alive. Shouldn't they be out telling the crowds?

That is what Thomas did. Tradition tells us that Thomas traveled to India where he proclaimed Christ as risen from the dead. And where he died a martyr's death. Today you can still find "Saint Thomas Christians" in India who claim a spiritual genealogy of belief stretching back to the first century. Belief. This is how Thomas' response is remembered by those who are still benefiting from his faithful response to the resurrection!

While Reading...

1 PICTURE THE SCENE
What are the sights, sounds, smells, textures that surround you when you envision yourself in this scene?

2 READ THE PASSAGE AGAIN
Read the passage again while immersing yourself in the scene.

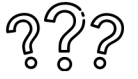
3 BECOME THOMAS
Place yourself in Thomas's experience. What is it like to be him in this moment?



Questions to Consider with God

In what ways do you experience the risen Christ?

How does your belief in the resurrection impact your day-to-day life?



Creative Reflection

Pray for God to open a door for you to expand the story of belief. Imagine with God how to appropriately bring resurrection life and hope into a different arena; beyond the doors of your church or current circle of believers. Blessed are those who haven't yet seen - but will believe!

Examine your week with God. Use the following prompts to reflect on the previous week with God.

Reveal

Ask God to open your eyes to where God was present throughout the week.

Ask God to deepen your awareness of yourself: your actions, your attitudes, your emotions.



Relish

What gifts did you receive this week? What are you thankful for from the past week?



Replay

Replay the events of the week with God.

Pay attention to the moments when you experienced strong emotions. Notice where God was present.



Remorse

With grace and compassion, reflect with God over the difficulties of the week.

What actions or attitudes did not allow you to be a light in the world?



Resurrection

Ask God to give you direction on how to walk in resurrected life In the week ahead.



“When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it. Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Mark 16:9-15

How have you
encountered
the risen Jesus?