

VOICES OF GRACE

I WILL BE EXALTED AMONG THE NATIONS



Grace Church Lenten Devotional 2026

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Voices of Grace: I Will Be Exalted Among The Nations, A Lenten Devotional
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PLAYLIST

Scan the QR code for the Lenten Devotional Playlist.

This playlist has been curated with songs that compliment each daily devotion. Listen to the song as a part of your meditation for the day, focusing on what Christ has done for you. May these songs help the word of Christ dwell richly in your heart.



A LETTER FROM PASTOR MIKE

Lent...Again?

You may be thinking, Are we really doing Lent again? If you're newer to our church, you may be wondering what Lent is all about in the first place. Fair questions. Lent can feel unfamiliar—especially in Protestant churches like ours—and it's often associated with Christian traditions other than our own.

At its heart, Lent is simply about preparation. It's a season of roughly forty days (technically forty-six, since Sundays are excluded) leading up to Resurrection Sunday. Historically, Christians have used this time to slow down, reflect, pray, and sometimes fast, in order to prepare their hearts for Holy Week and the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Much like Advent helps us prepare for Christmas, Lent helps us prepare to rejoice more deeply in Easter.

While Lent itself isn't commanded in Scripture, the practices associated with it certainly are. Scripture repeatedly calls God's people to intentional seasons of prayer, repentance, reflection, and fasting. Fasting—whether from certain foods or certain habits—creates space and hunger that can re-orient our hearts toward Christ. The goal is not deprivation for its own sake, but renewed attention to what we truly long for.

As in past years, participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to fast, and you are equally free not to. If you do choose to fast, Jesus reminds us not to make a show of it (Matt. 6:16–18). And whether or not you fast at all, we invite you to journey with us through this devotional as we move together toward Resurrection Sunday.

This year's devotions will trace God's heart and plan for the nations—his purpose to redeem a people for himself from every tribe and tongue. From beginning to end, the Bible tells one unified story of a God who gathers the nations through and to his Son. Our prayer is that this season would enlarge our vision of God's redemptive work and deepen our love for Christ, who gave his life not only for us, but for the world.

Blessings,
Pastor Mike



MIKE MATHESON

Lead Pastor

Member of Grace Church

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

This Lenten Devotional is meant to lead you and/or your family into deeper knowledge and love of Christ as you prepare your heart(s) to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ with the church on Resurrection Sunday. Each day features a verse, a devotion, a prayer prompt, and a song for you to use both individually and/or with your family.

Here's a weekly rhythm to follow:

- Monday through Friday: Read, reflect, listen to the song for the day, and pray.
- Saturday: Read the stories from our Global Partners and spend time praying.
- Sunday: Join us for corporate worship where we gather *To Know Christ And To Make Christ Known*.

Here's a daily format to follow:

- **First, read the scripture:** Each day take a few minutes to read the day's verse (maybe even the verses surrounding it) in your Bible. Next, take time to consider what you have read. What is the author saying? What does the author want you to know about God? About Jesus? About humanity?
- **Second, read the devotion:** Each devotion has been written by a member of Grace Church, all with diverse backgrounds and experiences. As they have studied the text and applied it to their lives, they are now writing to spur you on to reflect more personally on what the verse is saying and how you can apply it to your life.
- **Finally, pray:** Use some of the words and ideas from the verse and devotion to guide your prayers. These prayers can be filled with praise for who God is and what he has done for us. They can also be filled with sorrow over our sin, and the broken world that is in need of a savior. End with this praise: *Glory be to God the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen* (Gloria Patri).

Get Creative

We'd love to see how these verses inspire you to get creative. During Holy Week we'll have an art gallery filled with your work, inspired by the verses that this devotional explores. Please bring them to the church office or the information desk by Palm Sunday so that we can display them for the Holy Week services.



HOLY WEEK AT GRACE CHURCH

SUNDAY, MARCH 29TH
Palm Sunday
9:30 AM Worship Service

MONDAY, MARCH 30TH
Holy Monday

TUESDAY, MARCH 31ST
Holy Tuesday

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1ST
Spy Wednesday
5-9 PM Sense of Holy Week

THURSDAY, APRIL 2ND
Maundy Thursday
6:30 PM Communion Service

FRIDAY, APRIL 3RD
Good Friday
6:30 PM Service

SATURDAY, APRIL 4TH
Holy Saturday

SUNDAY, APRIL 5TH
Resurrection Sunday
9:30 AM Worship Service

THE STORY OF THE ARTWORK

When Pastor Mike assigned the title and verses for this year's Lenten Devotional, we knew that we wanted to get our global partners involved in the project. If we were going to spend so much time devoted to a project declaring that God would be exalted among the nations, it only seemed right to reach out to our friends around the world to see who might be able to contribute to the project.

During a home visit, we discovered that one of our partners not only has a gift for making incredible mosaics, they use this gift to support the work that gets done in their area. We contacted them through their business so that we could get unique commissioned art for our project and support them.

In purchasing art created by our global partner we were able to bless them, but they blessed us even more. We gave them the title of the Lenten Devotional and explained the theme, and asked for three pieces of art that we could display. The large mosaic made of the world map was created just for us, and for this specific Lenten Devotional. Here is the description of what the artwork represents:

A laurel leaf crown was a symbol of victory. The leaves intertwined with the crown of thorns are a picture of Christ's victory in his humility and suffering. The nations of the world were done in red, to symbolize the blood of Christ redeeming people from each tribe, people and nation. This is what we created as a picture of Christ glorified among the nations.

In order to protect our partners, we are omitting their name and their location. If you want to hear more about this global partner and how you can support their business, contact Michelle Jenks at mjenks@graceinracine.com.

SHARE YOUR ARTWORK

We'd love to see how these verses inspire you to get creative. During Holy Week we'll have an art gallery filled with your work, inspired by the verses that this devotional explores. Please bring them to the church office or the information desk by Palm Sunday so that we can display them for the Holy Week services.

As we've created this art gallery filled with your creations the past two years during Holy Week, we've been blessed to see how God is working in your life. Take some time to get creative and show us how your story intertwines with the work that God is doing among the nations.

WEEK 1
February 18 - 20

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE NATIONS



I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 12:3

Back in the 16th century, a Dutch Anabaptist by the name of Dirk Willems found himself in prison and facing death for his testimony of Christ. On one particularly cold night in 1569, Willems managed to escape the castle in which he was held and then ran toward freedom. A prison guard, alerted to what was happening, immediately took off after Willems in an attempt to get his captive back. But as the guard ran across an icy pond with his target in sight, he heard cracking under his feet and was soon submerged in the frigid water struggling for his life. Then, unexpectedly, a hand reached down to the drowning guard, pulled him out of the pond, and dragged him to safety. Dirk Willems had saved the life of the very person who intended to bring Paul back into captivity. It is a story of surprising kindness extended to a man that few would argue deserved it.

A similar idea is seen in our verse for today from Genesis 12. God extends a promise that applies to all of humanity and it seemingly comes out of thin air. It is an understatement to say that the relationship between man and God is shaky throughout the first eleven chapters of the Bible. Between our first parents' disobedience in the garden, mankind's intense wickedness that brings about a global flood, and the nations coming together to reject God's rule in building the tower at Babel, the human race stood with little reason to hope for any kindness from God. So it is surprising that we see this promise made to the man, Abram, in the opening words of Genesis 12. God throws a gracious lifeline to all people through these words to one man. Rejection or dishonoring of this gracious lifeline leads to cursing. But accepting or blessing God's

grace leads to God's blessing. It is the merciful plan of salvation that will be carried out through all of the ensuing pages of scripture. How surprising it is that God would offer such a kindness to the nations who had only rebelled against him up to this point.

That feeling of surprise should carry on to today as we consider that this same promise has made its way to us through Jesus. We, as members of the far off nations, have been confronted with unexpected grace. Grace, that we were in no way entitled to, showed up while we were enemies of God. And as sure as the Lord guaranteed it, those who have accepted the mercy he offers through his Son inherit the blessings. This amazement at God's unearned kindness should shape our lives and give us a humble joy to take steps toward becoming like Christ. But even beyond our inner life, we have been given the privilege to carry the good news of his promise to the rest of the world that still lives in rebellion. If God is willing to show us such grace, who's to say he's not willing to show it to our neighbor, our wayward son or daughter, or a tribe on the other side of the globe? We get to tell others of his surprising offer. This Lenten season, let the grace of Christ move us forward in the mission to make that grace known to others.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father God, Lord of grace and truth, we praise you for the mercy that you show us. We were once your enemies, but now you have shown favor to us by sending your son Jesus to provide the way for us to be blessed by you. Help us to walk in your favor and to share the blessing with others.

TODAY'S SONG:

The Blessing by The Worship Initiative

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people...
Titus 2:11

A personal prayer of mine over the last year has been that I would not simply have knowledge of and obedience to God's Word, but that it would truly impact and change my heart. Knowledge of God should spur us to love God more and create a desire in us for others to know the gospel. But often I find myself knowing about God more as a source of pride instead of the springboard of loving God more. This is not just a problem found in me (and perhaps you), today, but was true when Titus was written too.

In the midst of giving instructions for godly living to the church in Crete, the Apostle Paul interrupts himself to remind them that it is not just knowledge or instructions that he is giving them. He reminds them that it is the grace of God that is the source of their salvation and that is what should cause them to change their actions. These were not simply rules to follow to please God or knowledge to puff them up, but it was his grace working in their lives that changed their hearts. When Paul wrote "*the grace of God has appeared,*" he was reminding them of Jesus' recent death and resurrection. The church in Crete had the grace of God with them then, and we have the grace of God with us now. And that changes everything.

During this season of Lent, we spend time reflecting on the cross and the salvation we receive as a result. The cross should change us at the heart level, resulting in our desire to follow God in obedience. This obedience cannot be out of obligation or earning God's grace, but is an outworking of God's grace in our lives. The grace of God changes our hearts and leads us to obedience.

This grace also brings “*salvation for all people.*” His grace isn’t only available to some. It’s truly available to everyone. And we should want to share it with everyone. No one is barred from the offer of his grace. And this is because one day, at his future appearance, he wants the nations to gather before his throne. Paul reminds us that we wait for this day, for “*the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13), which is what brings us hope in the midst of this life. This future reality is why God has redeemed us and purified people from all over the world to be “*his own possession who are zealous for good works*” (Titus 2:14).

Consider how the cross has changed your heart. How has the cross ignited you to be “*zealous for good works*”? Is your hope found in the grace and glory of God, or is it found in the temporary things of this world? My prayer is that my words and actions would be vessels to bring the hope of salvation to all people. I pray that this would be true of our church as well. This letter to Titus reminds us that living obediently from a changed heart is one way that the world around us can come to know the grace of God. May we be a people that goes out into the world shining Christ’s love brightly, so that God is exalted among the nations.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, we praise you for the salvation that you offer all people. What an amazing gift you offer to the world through your son Jesus. He is your grace sent to us. Help us to cherish him and delight in him so that we might be zealous for his righteousness, for the good works for which you have saved us.

TODAY’S SONG:

Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me by CityALight

God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Psalm 67:4

Lent is not ultimately about what we lay down; it is about what we lift up. Lent is about intensifying our affections for the One whom it anticipates. The psalmist elevates our souls to the heights of God's purpose for the nations: "*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy...*" Lent calls us to join the psalmist in exultation, celebrating the fulfillment of the end for which all people were created, which, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "*is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*" Right now, we experience this in part; soon it will be our full reality. We face hardship, sufferings, and loss, coupled with joy and happiness in moments. One day, only joy will remain.

Why can we hold to this truth with certainty? As we read in Psalm 67 the joyful melody of worship is born from a deep awareness of God's covenant faithfulness expressed clearly in his judgments over the nations of the world. Rejoice, oh nations, because the Lord leads the world. And what are his judgments like? How does the psalmist describe his leadership? The reason for his song is because God judges "with equity and guides the nations upon the earth." God is a good and fair judge that guides the affairs of the world. For the psalmist, joy belongs to those who know the Lord's sovereign rule as judge.

This is the kingdom for which we long. And unlike the psalmist, we know the king who rules this kingdom: Jesus of Nazareth. The fullness of God dwelled bodily in him. Because of his obedience, the Father gave all authority in heaven and on earth to Christ (Matthew 28:18). He rules the nations now, leading the affairs of all peoples, calling sinners to repentance and saints to dependence.

One day he will return in glory and power, conquering evil and reigning forever. That is why we hold with certainty the truth of everlasting joy. We experience Christ's reign in our souls through salvation, and his Spirit is the seal of the promise of his forever kingdom. How good is our leader, our King!

This is the truth that should fill us with joy and gladness. So how do we live in this joy now? The exhortation is simple yet profound: those who know God's salvation must respond with praise from grateful hearts. Praise is the key to joyful obedience. It fills the heart with delight in God's will. Praise grants strength to overcome temptation, patience to withstand trials, gladness in generosity, and endurance under mistreatment. Praise fuels the Church's mission to the nations and stands as the ultimate goal of discipleship. Praise is the supreme response of a sinner overwhelmed by grace.

Do you know his salvation? Do you treasure it with all your heart? Do your lips and actions bear witness to it? The psalmist sings that the nations should be glad in Jesus. Do your neighbors know that you are glad in Jesus? Do you long for His eternal rule? Praise is the expression and motivation of all these things. So let your song of joy and gladness rise up, first within your own soul and then joyfully with God's people as we walk with Jesus. This Lenten season, as we remember the Savior laying down his life, let us lay down ours, and lift up our praise to him.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord God of all nations, tribes and tongues, we are glad and joyful in you for your leadership of the earth. May the praise of your people be lifted up for all the world to know the glory of our God.

TODAY'S SONG:

Let the Nations Be Glad by Matt Boswell and Matt Papa

STORIES FROM ALL NATIONS: NORTH AFRICA

Chris*, a man in his 50's in North Africa, searched for a Bible. By chance, he happened upon a copy of the New Testament and brought it home with him. However, Chris was afraid that if he opened it and started to read it, disaster would strike him.

Then, Chris had a dream. He dreamed that God appeared to him, and a voice whispered in his ear, "Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Open the book."

So Chris opened the New Testament and started reading. He kept reading, and then one day, while watching TV, he saw a local phone number. When he called it, he got in touch with an organization that helps get people established with local churches, and spoke with one of the staff members, Joe. Chris and Joe met in person after speaking on the phone, and Joe helped Chris get connected with a local church.

Since then, Chris has become an evangelist. He doesn't miss an opportunity to tell others about Jesus Christ and how his life has been changed.

Take time to praise God for the way he is always working to make his name known. Pray that you would not be afraid to speak to others about Jesus. Pray for the work that is being done by organizations around the world to establish local churches in every nation.

WEEK 2
February 23 - 27

GOD'S NAME MADE KNOWN



*But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power,
so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth*

Exodus 9:16

Powerful words—the words of the LORD! Quoted by Moses, a timid but obedient servant of the Living God, and addressed to the intimidating ruler of Egypt, Pharaoh. Yes! God would use this foreign leader to reveal something of the greatness and power of the LORD, the Living God, to the people of the world.

God is full of surprises, isn't he? From the very beginning of Moses' relationship with God, the LORD had told Moses that he was very aware of the suffering of his people who had been taken to Egypt by Pharaoh, and indeed he had a plan to rescue them! And not only was he aware of their suffering, but, surprise, Moses was the person he had chosen to lead them out of slavery! God would be with him, of course, but he would be the man. And God told him, once he had convinced the elders of Israel to support him, he would have to go to the king of Egypt and demand freedom for the people. But God promised that he would prepare Pharaoh to cooperate, so that he would let his people go. In fact, God said the Egyptians would pay them to go so that they won't go empty-handed.

So now the time has come. The LORD tells Moses that once again in the morning he is to present himself to Pharaoh and say to him: "*Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me'*" (Exodus 9:1). Again and again, Pharaoh had refused to release God's people from their captivity. But this was all part of God's plan. God wanted Pharaoh to refuse. He could have easily dealt with Pharaoh and Egypt. As he says to Pharaoh in the verse preceding ours, "*For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you*

and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth” (Exodus 9:15). God is sending plagues and hardening Pharaoh’s heart to prove a point. What point is that?

“To show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” God is a God of infinite power and he wants everyone to know it so that his name gets all the attention in the earth.

God didn’t only raise up Pharaoh for that purpose. That’s the purpose we all share in this life. He wants to show us his power so that his name is proclaimed in all the earth. That’s why he sent his Son Jesus and raised him from the dead, the greatest display of power because he defeated death.

Do you believe this is your purpose in life, to know the power of God and proclaim him? Have you experienced his power? As you read and meditate on God’s Word day by day, ask him to reveal his power to you, specifically to see his power displayed through the death and resurrection of Christ. I believe our Father loves that request! And remember the statement in our verse for today: *“I have raised you up (given you life) to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed.”* We have no excuse, this is why we are here where God has placed us. To tell the people around us about Jesus, and to show them his character, and his love, by the way we live.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, please fill us afresh with yourself and the knowledge of your power, and equip us, even today, so that the people around us would get a clear glimpse of you and of your faithful love for them, for your glory.

TODAY'S SONG:

All the Hail of Power of Jesus Name by The Redeemer Choir Austin Texas

Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

Deuteronomy 4:6

Exhausted. That's how I felt after taking my kids to the Milwaukee County Zoo. They were six and eight at the time, and the residents of monkey island seemed to be better behaved that day. We stopped for dinner, at a sit down restaurant, mind you, and I feared the difficulties were only getting started. Mercifully the kids' behavior during dinner was excellent. Toward the end of the meal a nice older couple came up and complimented the kids on how well behaved they were. My parenting was redeemed when I heard those total strangers praise my kids' good behavior, as their good behavior was a reflection on me.

In Deuteronomy 4 Moses is speaking to the people of Israel, who are in the wilderness, and nearing the end of their 40 years of wandering. As they are about to begin their conquest of the promised land, Moses exhorts the people to both *listen* to the rules and statutes, and *do them*. Moses tells them that their listening to God's commands as well as *doing* them were so that they might live and take possession of the promised land (4:1).

But that's not all.

In verse 6, Moses tells the people that by following God's commands, Israel will cause a chain reaction. This chain reaction, starting with Israel's obedience, would then lead to their wisdom and understanding, and then will cause the nations around them to take notice, to hear about their wisdom and to acknowledge that something is different about this group of people. Moses emphasizes the point when he rhetorically asks: what other great

nation has a god so near to them as the Lord is to Israel, and what nation has rules which are so righteous?

Israel's obedience to God is not only for their good but also reflects on the nature of the Lord and their nearness to him. Their obedience is meant to draw the nations' attention to their God. In 1 Kings 10 we read how Solomon's wisdom had made him so famous that the Queen of Sheba had to see Solomon for herself. She recognized that the Lord had blessed Solomon and delighted in him. The obedience of God's people to his commands acts as an indication of their proximity to God (Deuteronomy 4:7), as God's righteous commands reveal his wisdom. The obedience of God's people to his wise commands is meant to draw the nations closer to God. Jesus adds clarity to this point at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount when he calls his people to be the light of the world, so that all people would see our good works and give glory to God the Father (Matthew 5:14-16).

As Christians who have been saved by grace and not by our works, we might wonder if our obedience makes a difference. It makes all of the difference in the world! God will use our careful listening and faithful obedience to set us apart from the rest of the world, ultimately drawing the nations to himself. The nations are watching us. Will they commend us on our wise and good behavior, or will they see us acting just like them?

PRAYER PROMPT

Holy Father God, you are righteous in all your ways, and your commands are perfect and good. Forgive us for failing to obey and live in the wisdom and understanding that your word offers. Give us the power of your Spirit to walk in a manner worthy of our Savior so that we might reflect your holiness to the world.

TODAY'S SONG:

My Labour is Not in Vain by CityALight

...so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.

Joshua 4:24

I love baptisms! I'm not being hyperbolic when I say that I cry every time someone shares the story of God working in their life. No matter the details, I'm always amazed and driven to worship him. These baptisms serve as memorials to a great and mighty God who is worthy to be praised.

There was a time when God's people would build physical monuments to serve as reminders of the greatness of God. The nation of Israel was directed in Joshua 4 to build just such a memorial, something that would remind all the generations to come that the God they serve is mighty and will provide for them. In fact, according to our verse today, it wouldn't just be for Israel, but this memorial stood "*so that all the peoples of the earth*" would know about the almighty God of Israel.

But why exactly are they building this memorial? Well, for that, we need a little bit of backstory. The Israelites had been wandering in the desert for 40 years because they were afraid to follow God into the promised land. Then, a new generation grew up and were poised to enter the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their descendants. But they hit a bit of an obstacle. They needed to cross the Jordan River. Sound familiar?

This isn't the first body of water that blocked Israel's way. Just a generation prior, the people of Israel found themselves facing the Red Sea with the army of Egypt hot on their tail. At both the Red Sea and the Jordan River, God would demonstrate his mighty power and desire to take care of his people by separating the wa-

ters and leading them safely across on dry ground. Then, here in the book of Joshua, after crossing the Jordan River, God instructs their leader Joshua to have one man from each of the 12 tribes of Israel lift a stone from the middle of the Jordan River, where the priests stood with the Ark of the Covenant, and carry the stones on their shoulder to their camp for the night.

God goes on to tell them *why* he wants them to do this—he wants the Israelites to tell the generations of all the peoples of the earth that he is the LORD, the God of Israel who is mighty to save.

And as we look forward, we see that God demonstrates this saving power again—not just to cross a river and flee a temporary enemy. This time, God would send Jesus to offer salvation, from the enemy of sin, to all the peoples of the earth forever.

Every baptism at Grace Church serves as a memorial to the power of God’s salvation. We model Jesus’ death and resurrection with every baptism we do, calling all who witness to remember the salvation offered by God through Christ. What is your testimony of God’s saving power in your life? Take some time to write it out and then share it with someone so that all the peoples of the earth might know our great and mighty God.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord God, yours is the mighty hand that saves. When we put our faith in your salvation, our lives become a living sacrifice, a testimony to your great and abiding love for us. May we use our lives for your glory as we declare the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has conquered sin and death.

TODAY’S SONG:
To God Be the Glory by Selah

...hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

1 Kings 8:43

In truth, this short paragraph in 1 Kings is one that is easy to skim past as we read through the Old Testament tales of the Israelites. The gist of this verse is that Solomon, who has just built a grand temple to the Lord, is hoping that as people from other lands hear of its splendor they will come and revere the Lord in worship, just as the people of Israel did. But then Solomon asks God (rather boldly in my opinion) not only to hear their prayers, but to answer their prayers. He says, *“do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you.”* Why does Solomon ask for this?

The ancient world was all but built upon a *my god is bigger than your god* mentality. If other nations heard of the success of the people of Israel, and then came and saw the splendor of their God’s earthly dwelling place, maybe it might lead them to a fear of the Lord. Maybe. But if they prayed to God and God answered those prayers...that’s next level. That would get their attention. So Solomon asks God to hear and answer their prayers *“...in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear [the Lord]”*. He knows that his God, the true God, is bigger than any other god.

Scripture always seems to come back to prayer. We are commanded to pray and to have faith that our prayers will be answered, subject to God’s will and timing. Still, when was the last time you asked God to answer the prayers of a family member, friend or even stranger, who does not yet know Christ (and I don’t simply mean the *sinner’s prayer*) for the sake of God’s name being made known to them?

When do most people, Christian and non-Christian alike, call out to God? Usually it's in times of crisis, consequential decisions or matters of sheer life and death. Imagine if, in those times, we asked God boldly to answer those prayers, and he answered them? Talk about showing the powerful majesty and true love of God to an unbelieving world! What if we did so not at a distance, but we offered to pray side-by-side with those family, friends, and strangers, and asked God to answer their prayers? What if we continued to come alongside them in prayer and walk alongside them in their time of crisis? Wouldn't that be how we can reflect God's glory here on earth?

I can't help but think it might be in those moments that the door will be opened and the Holy Spirit will reveal to them the saving grace of Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection, thus revealing the true majesty of God to the world. So what are we waiting for? Let's start praying.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord God Almighty, we come before you asking what King Solomon asked, that you would hear the prayers of those who don't know you by faith. Our friends and family who still live in darkness cry out searching for answers and help. Father would you hear them and meet them in their need. Show your power and goodness that they might glorify you.

TODAY'S SONG:

Facing A Task Unfinished by Keith and Kristyn Getty

So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone.

2 Kings 19:19

Have you ever had someone you're talking with question God's goodness or mock his purposes? As a chaplain, this is a regular occurrence for me. I offer hope, peace, compassion, and faith to people struggling with hard things. Sometimes they scoff at the claim that God desires to comfort, assure, and guide them through hardships.

Today's verse gives me hope to continue trusting God's purposes even when others find it utterly ridiculous. It's part of a prayer made by Hezekiah, Judah's king, seeking God's rescue from the Assyrian army camped outside of Jerusalem. Only eight years prior, the Assyrians toppled the northern kingdom of Israel. In 722 B.C. Sennacherib, Assyria's king, had gone on to take every fortified city of Judah. Jerusalem was next. After a failed attempt to purchase mercy from Sennacherib with silver and temple gold, Hezekiah sends for the prophet Isaiah asking him to pray. God sends word back through Isaiah that he is aware of Assyria's mocking and is going to prevent the assault on Jerusalem.

After further taunts and intimidation, Hezekiah himself prays for Judah's deliverance. He urges God to act so that all the nations will know that he is God alone. He recognizes what's at stake: God's name and glory. If the Assyrians level Jerusalem, the nations would conclude that the God of Israel is as powerless and insignificant as other gods, just another idol to toss on the fire. But the LORD is decidedly not like other gods. He created heaven and earth. He is the one, true living God. And He answers Hezekiah's prayer in chapter 19 with his plans to intervene. Assyria had mocked and

reviled him (v. 22) even though their power came from God (v. 25). They are pawns, and the LORD is the chess Grandmaster. To prove as much, the LORD will bridle Assyria like a horse and turn them away from Jerusalem (v. 28). God tells Hezekiah he will do all of this *“for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David”* (v. 34). In this instance, God exalted himself among the nations by defeating a pompous king without the need for his people to lift a finger. The LORD’s glory and promise to David warranted a decisive victory over Sennacherib.

For us, in this season of Lent, we can take heart that God is still working out his purposes for his name’s sake, even if it feels like we are waiting and straining our eyes to see it. Our eager expectation and hope is that God will continue to act for his own sake and for the sake of his son, Jesus Christ, so that the nations will know that he alone is God. Rather than turning us into spectators, this confidence compels us to make Christ known among our neighborhoods and the nations because the outcome is sure. Nothing will stand in his way; not a mighty army, not an increasingly polarized culture. God will triumph. Just look at the empty tomb. His name will be exalted among the nations.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord God, you alone are the one true God, worthy of exaltation. Thank you for your salvation of your people through your Son Jesus Christ. May your name be made holy in all the earth. May all the kingdoms of man recognize you and give you the worship you deserve.

“Occasionally, I take the opportunity to visit with my friend Rachel* at her workplace during her lunch hour. On two occasions, our conversations led to deeper topics.

At one point, Rachel suggested we continue our conversation in a more comfortable setting, where we would have more time. I gladly agreed, and she accepted my invitation to come over for dinner. Rachel shared her beliefs with me, including the history of Islam and their prophet.

Rachel was curious about Mary and asked several questions, so I invited her to read the account when the angel tells Mary she will have a child. Our conversation moved across a variety of topics. When we spoke about Moses and the Passover, I explained how the blood on the Israelites’ doorframes protected them from the plague of death. I then shared how this event foreshadows what our Savior did by becoming the Lamb. Rachel asked for more details about how the blood cleanses us, so I explained the Old Testament sacrificial system and how it pointed forward to the future Lamb who would shed his blood for us.

The conversation shifted again when Rachel mentioned that, according to her book, most women go to hell for being gossips and scandalous. I responded by saying that judgment before a holy God is not limited by gender, ethnicity, or race—we are all accountable.

Rachel then asked if I had always been a follower of Jesus. I shared that I had not and briefly described how I became one. This changed the tone of our conversation from an intellectual discussion to more personal. Although we have not had a follow-up conversation yet, my heart yearns for her salvation. Please lift her up that her eyes may be unveiled.”

Take time today to pray for “Rachel,” and many like her, who are in the midst of discovering who Jesus is, and what it means to be saved from sin. Pray that the Holy Spirit would be working in the conversations of those around the globe, in all nations, to bring glory to God, and many to a saving faith in Jesus.

*Names have been changed to protect the ministry of our Global Partners.

WEEK 3
March 2 - 6

GLOBAL PRAISE FORETOLD



All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

Psalm 22:27

It felt like I was running a race, working hard to get to the next thing that could pull me out of whatever slump I was living in. Heading to the bars with my buddies, partying, and not caring about what anyone else thought about me, let alone God. I was the one running a hellbound race, and the only thing that caused my focus to change was the amazing grace of the gospel. That grace pulled me away from the ways of the world, caused me to remember the salvation I received by the blood of Christ on the cross, and turned me away from living a life that sought to glorify me rather than God. Sin pulls us away and distracts us from living a life that honors God. Some distractions can be little. But some distractions can be life changing, as in David's case in Psalm 22.

This psalm starts out as a psalm of lament, where David calls out in distress because he feels like God has forgotten him. We see the cries of David and how he is exhausted, beaten down, surrounded, and overall discouraged. These feelings are all legitimate; they are the day to day struggles that some of us experience with pain, suffering, and even loss. In verses 16-18, we see parallels in this psalm of David's struggles to that of Christ during the crucifixion. The heaviness of life is present here for David as it was for Jesus, but we see a change in David's focus in verse 19. He has gone from a man who is worn down by the distractions of his life, to a man who has been drawn back to remembering the faithfulness of God. He remembers God's deliverance of Israel and the promises of a faithful God. Therefore David's lament turns to worship!

Then David remembers and turns from the distractions of his life to the truth and faithfulness of God. The psalm builds to a crescendo in verse 27 when all the nations of the earth will remember and turn to Israel's God so that all the families of the nations, not just Israel, will worship God. Their sin distracted them, but now their remembrance of who God is and what he has done brings them to worship.

So what does that mean for us? Well, first it's a check of our own heart. Where are you distracted by the things of the world and forgetting the things of God? Let the remembrance of what God has done in your life be an opportunity to bring your heart to a place of worship. Secondly, we have a mission at Grace Church of *Knowing Christ and Making Christ Known*. Our mission statement isn't just a call for you to grow in your relationship with Christ; it's also a call to make him known to those in your day-to-day life who don't know him, so that one day, all the nations will exalt God. Ask the Lord to reveal to you what part you have to play in bringing about this vision of all the nations remembering and turning to the Lord?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father we confess to you our distracted hearts that so easily turn our focus from you to the things of the world. We forget and we are led astray. Help us to remember. Help us to turn to you because only you are the source of blessing and life. Help us to worship you and you alone. And please do this in my life, my family's life, my church's life, and in the whole world.

TODAY'S SONG:

In Christ Alone by Ri-An, Sebastien Corn

*All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you,
O Lord, and shall glorify your name*

Psalm 86:9

I am terrible at golf. Admittedly, I don't particularly like the sport (too slow!) and have made little effort to improve at it. What I know, though, is that whether you are competing in The Masters or playing a round of mini-golf, you have to know the location of the hole. Skill, equipment, environment, experience, none of it helps if you do not know where the ball is supposed to go. That fixed, unchanging location is what gives direction and purpose for the entire game. It's the beacon to which you orient yourself; whether you're on a fairway, putting green, or have found yourself (like me most of the time!) off course in the weeds.

Reading Psalm 86, I cannot help but think that David would have been an amazing golfer. This psalm is a song of lament. David starts by crying out to God to listen and respond because he is "*poor and needy*" (v. 1). But he doesn't even mention until verse 14 that his life is being threatened by ungodly men. David's plight is not the point of the prayer. Instead, his lament flows with praise, petition, and promise. He grounds himself in the reminder of who God is: good, forgiving, abounding in steadfast love, unlike any other (verses 5 and 8). He praises God for his mighty works and wondrous deeds (verses 8 and 10). He petitions God to teach him his ways, unite his heart to fear God's name (v. 11). And his plea for God's salvation is so that those who hate him would be brought to shame for God's glory (v. 17). Amidst the praise and petitions, David's focus on God transcends his view beyond the course of his own life to the kingdom course on which all creation is playing. "*All the nations you have made*," David sings in verse 9, "*shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name*."

Psalm 86:9 points to the culmination of God's redemption of his people, across generations and geographies. It is the opening notes of the fulfillment of God's promise to redeem and restore humanity to the harmony of his original design, when the song of restoration becomes one of unending worship from every tongue and tribe and nation God created. We see this described by John later in Scripture, in the book of Revelation, with the prophetic vision of the new heavens and new earth. Reigning over the new Jerusalem, which comes down from the new heaven, is God, whose glory gives the light by which the nations walk to bring him worship. "*They will bring into it,*" John writes in Revelation 21:26, "*the glory and the honor of the nations.*"

An even greater example, a greater David, was our Lord Jesus Christ. As we walk through this Lenten season, we reflect on the life, death, burial, and triumphant resurrection of Jesus, the King of Kings whose gaze remained ever-fixed on God's glory and kingdom. Jesus's post-resurrection commission in Matthew 28:19 to "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*" imposes that gaze to his disciples, to them then and us now who believe in and follow Christ. As you look to the cross, does your gaze see beyond today, to the day when all nations will come and worship before the Lord God Almighty, glorifying his name? Is that day, that glorious vision, the hole to which you are driving the ball of your life? I may never score under par, never hit a hole in one, and frankly have little desire to achieve either of those things. But I can (and should) yearn, seek, and strive to keep my gaze fixated on the glory of God when all the nations gather in worship to glorify his name.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father of Heavenly Glory, you have fixed a time when all things will come to completion. A day when the nations will gather in worship before you to glorify your name. Keep my life oriented toward that goal.

Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 117

I am not a Jew. I wasn't born into a Jewish family. I don't trace my ancestry back to the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or the nation of Israel and the religion of Judaism. And because I am not a Jew, using the categories of the Bible, I am what would be called a Gentile. While the Jewish scripture, which we call the Old Testament, wasn't written about me or any other Gentile, it was written for me, as it was written to be read by all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike. And how do I know this? Because right here in Psalm 117 there's a command for me, a non-Jew: "*Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!*" That's me. I am part of all nations and all peoples. I'm to praise the Lord. So here's my question: what's a command for me and all non-Jews doing in the Jewish scriptures? And maybe even more interesting of a question, why is there a command for Gentiles to worship the Jewish God?

The answer to the first question can be found in the very founding of Judaism, when God tells Abraham that he is going to bless all the nations of the world through his offspring (see Genesis 12). In other words, the very purpose of Israel wasn't to establish a religion disconnected from the world, but rather to establish a people that would transform the world. If that's true, and Judaism is actually about blessing the world, then it makes sense for the Jewish scriptures to speak directly to the nations. But the more interesting thing about this psalm is that it commands Gentiles like me to praise the Lord, the God of Israel. So what reason does it give for this? Here's its reason: "*For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*" In other words, I should wor-

ship the God of Israel because of his steadfast love and faithfulness. But what does that mean?

Well, the Apostle Paul recognizes this, and in his letter to the Romans, he picks up this case and makes explicit the reason for all peoples to praise the God of Israel. In chapter 15, verses 8-9, he says, *“For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”* Now there’s a lot there, but what Paul is saying is that through the Jews we got Christ, and then through Christ all peoples and nations get God’s mercy. Therefore, all peoples should glorify, or praise, God. The love and faithfulness of God through Christ, Paul says, is the reason for all peoples to praise the Lord. Christ is the reason for the command in Psalm 117. Paul even quotes this psalm in verse 11, saying because of Christ this scripture has been fulfilled. Because of Christ, and the mercy of God through his Son dying on the cross and rising again, all nations have reason to praise the Lord.

So this Easter, when you go to church, look around. There will be a lot of Gentiles there praising the Lord. And then think of Psalm 117. And in that moment, see it how Paul saw it, as being fulfilled. Then join in the praise of all the nations and all the peoples who look to Christ and see the steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord.

PRAYER PROMPT

Thank you Lord that you are the God of all peoples, and that you used the nation of Israel for the purpose of bringing all nations together to praise the LORD. Help us to worship you in Spirit and in Truth, for great is your faithfulness and steadfast love to us in Christ forever.

And many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:2

Everybody loves a good redemption story. In 2018, Simon Yates was in the lead of a three-week bike race in Italy, the Giro D’Italia. With only three days to go, the riders found themselves racing up one of the steepest mountain passes in the Italian Alps, the Colle Delle Finestre. Yates faltered greatly that day, suffered a crushing defeat and ended up in 21st place overall. Seven years later, Yates again found himself racing up the Finestre, starting the day in third place. This time, halfway up the climb, he rode away from his top rivals, propelled himself into first place, and added his name to a list of champions forever.

In the book of Micah, we see another redemption story taking place. Micah 4:2 tells us that people from all over will come to the Lord to learn his ways and walk his paths. That is a pretty incredible thing considering in the chapters before, Micah was telling of the complete and utter destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem. These cities would be made into a “*heap of ruins*” (3:12) before being restored by God as a place to which people will come. He put the blame for the destruction squarely on the sins of the people and the corruption of the leaders, priests, and prophets. This transition from destruction to having people from all over ascending to God’s house is stark at first, but it gives us a glimpse at the redemption story that God is bringing about. He will draw people to himself, and he will be exalted among all the nations. Micah goes on to say that the law and the word of the Lord shall go out from Jerusalem. These two parts of the passage work together and create a cyclical event—the word going out and people coming in.

If you think about it, aren't our own redemption stories the same? God drew us out of a life of sin and self-destruction and showed us his grace. We should study his word, learn his ways and walk his paths. On top of that, we should go on to share our faith with the world around us both near and far. Jesus tells his disciples in the Great Commission to "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*" (Matthew 28:19). Paul then expounds on this in Romans 10:14 when he says, "*How, then will they call on him when they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*"

While Yates' redemption on the Colle Delle Finestre was brought about by proper training and execution of a plan, ours is solely brought about by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Just as Jerusalem and Samaria were destroyed, Jesus died for our sin and corruption so that we might be restored and have life with him. God saw to it that this good news would reach us where we were. Let us now take it to the world around us. After all, everyone loves a good redemption story.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father God, you are the Lord of our redemption. Salvation is your plan and purpose to bring glory to your name and we give you all the credit for it. You brought your word to us in the flesh and drew us into your kingdom. May our lives serve the message of the gospel of Christ that brought us redemption so that others may now know the good news.

TODAY'S SONG:

May the Peoples Praise You by Keith and Kristyn Getty

*For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech,
that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD
and serve him with one accord.*

Zephaniah 3:9

One afternoon, my brother had been playing video games for quite some time, and I politely asked for my turn. Of course, he did everything he could to keep playing—ignoring me and pretending not to hear. Out of frustration, I snapped, turned off the console, and grabbed the controller. He stormed off crying, and my guilt immediately sank in. At that moment, I had a choice: repent and make things right, or remain stubborn and face the consequences. Thankfully, I chose to apologize. My brother forgave me, and peace was restored.

That moment reminds me of how sin damages relationships—not only with others, but with God. Yet it also reminds me that repentance leads to restoration. Humanity’s greatest need has always been for a way back to God, for hearts made clean and lives made whole. That’s exactly what Zephaniah 3:9 promises, and what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah in Judah, around 640–609 B.C. when the nation had turned from God by worshiping idols. Their speech had become so disgraceful to God, not because of the words themselves, but because of the source of those words: their defiled and idolatrous hearts. And God had had enough. Zephaniah warned of coming judgment, but also declared a message of hope: God would not abandon His people forever. Instead, He would purify them, transforming their speech and their hearts so they could worship Him together in unity. When Zephaniah records God saying, “*I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech*,” it points to more than just moral improvement.

It speaks of complete spiritual transformation—something only God can do. Because our speech flows from the heart, for God to change the words of his people, He must cleanse his people and make them new from the inside out.

This prophecy ultimately finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus bore our sin, taking upon himself the impurity that separates us from God. Through his death and resurrection, he broke the power of sin and made a way for us to be purified. By faith in Christ, all who believe are given new hearts and renewed minds. Through the Holy Spirit, God begins the ongoing work of sanctification—transforming our speech, attitudes, and desires so that we can call upon his name and serve him alone. So Zephaniah's promise isn't just for a distant future; it's a present reality for everyone who professes belief in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Just as I needed to humble myself and seek forgiveness from my brother, we must continually come before God in repentance, trusting in the finished work of Jesus. When we do, we experience his renewal and the unity Zephaniah foretold—believers from every nation calling on the name of the Lord with one voice. Where in your life do you need to experience Christ's renewing work? Are there areas of speech, thought, or action that need to be purified by his Spirit?

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, thank you for the cross. Thank you that through your death and resurrection, I have been made new. Purify my heart and transform my words so I may honor you. Unite your people in one accord, that we may call on your name and serve you faithfully.

STORIES FROM ALL NATIONS: CENTRAL ASIA

“I am grateful for the GPA language methodology used at my language school, which allows my teacher Sheri* and me to engage in experiential activities appropriate to my learning phase. Sheri and I both enjoy baking, so I have been showing her some of my recipes while she helps correct my language.

Recently, we made Christmas cookies together, and I asked her what she knew about Christmas. She admitted she only knew about the big Christmas tree in New York City and that it was Jesus’ birthday. I asked if she would like to hear the Christmas story, and she said yes.

Between switching cookie trays and timers going off, I shared the story of Mary and Joseph, as well as the shepherds and wise men’s visit. It was Sheri’s first time hearing the full story. Only time will tell how the Father might use this to draw her closer to him. We have had several meaningful conversations, and I ask that you pray the Father would cause a seed of faith to grow in Sheri’s heart.”

Take time to pray today for “Sheri.” Pray that this introduction to Jesus would be the start of more conversations that would lead to a saving faith in Jesus. Pray for opportunities to turn every day activities in your own life (like baking cookies) into a time to engage with others and start a conversation about faith in Jesus.

WEEK 4
March 9 - 12

CHRIST - LIGHT TO THE NATIONS



In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Isaiah 11:10

Has there ever been someone you idolized while growing up? Maybe it was someone who was just amazing at what they did and made you want to be just like them? Such people have a way of drawing others to themselves more than the average Joe. For example, if you love to paint, there are probably few people you look up to more than someone like Van Gogh. Or you might love singing, which is why you can't get enough of Whitney Houston's powerful, pitch-perfect voice. You may even have an obsession with basketball and are willing to debate anyone who doesn't think Michael Jordan is the best.

In our verse for today, Isaiah prophesied that at the end of time, "*the root of Jesse*" will be a *signal* (or banner), a man who will attract all of the nations to himself. Earlier in chapter 11, Isaiah gives us a picture of this one who is the promised Messiah King. He will be a signal for all of mankind. This signal we know to be Jesus Christ who is unlike any other celebrity we might have idolized in our life. In fact, it's not even close! He captures our attention in ways unlike any other. We don't need to be interested in a particular skill or hobby to be drawn to Christ. We simply need to recognize that we are lost and in need of a savior.

In the New Testament, Jesus echoes Isaiah's words when he says, "*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself*" (John 12:32). This is how God intends to reveal himself among the nations and be exalted in our lives. Indeed, two thousand years ago, there was already a *signal*. Jesus was *lifted up* on the cross to take upon himself the punishment that we deserved for our sin.

The singular event of the cross is actually central to what Isaiah is saying about *that day*. In fact, the nations, all of mankind, will inquire (want to know) because of the cross. They will ask how the death of one man, Jesus, is so significant to the whole world.

At the end of our verse today, Isaiah tells us that the Messiah King is the signal that will lead us to the glorious resting place. And Jesus confirms this when he says, “*In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also*” (John 14:2-3).

I can’t help but wonder if I have truly accepted that Jesus is the sole signal to which I must look. Am I regularly filled with humility knowing that I would be totally lost without Christ? Or am I always trying to earn at least 1% of this glorious resting place so that I can say I partly contributed to my salvation? The more I attempt to work my way to God, the more I realize how unworthy I am and how much I truly need Jesus. May we take these words of Isaiah to heart and thank God that he has given us his best signal, Jesus, to draw not only us, but the nations to himself!

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you were lifted up on that cross as a signal to the world of your love for all people. And all who look to you shall be saved. Help us to look at the cross and see our sin more clearly. And may we clearly see you, the perfect Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. And may we lift that banner up and proclaim it to the world.

TODAY’S SONG:
Joy to the World by Citizens

He says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel;

*I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

Isaiah 49:6

For years, my life as a firefighter was steady and familiar. Our small suburban village was often described as something out of a Norman Rockwell painting. I knew every street, many of the families, and every shortcut home. A few years ago, we entered into a shared service agreement with our neighboring big city fire department. This meant that we would have to regularly leave our familiar suburban village to respond to the *other side of the tracks*. I remember that first day just sitting and waiting for the tones to sound. Uncertainty could be felt throughout the firehouse as we waited to see which of the calls would be the first. We wouldn't just be leaving our *bubble*; we'd be heading to places we'd heard lots of stories about but had very little knowledge of. Regardless of our feelings, the agreement was in place, and when the address was announced, we would go and do our jobs because there was a need for help that was greater than just us and our small town.

I see a similarity in our verse for today where God is talking about the servant that he would raise up to save Israel. But he points out that it's not just Israel that needs saving. There's a bigger world out there that needs salvation. It's every nation. But more than that, God says that simply saving Israel would be *too light a thing*. It would be too easy for God. It wouldn't be as glorious. There would be greater glory in an even greater salvation. A salvation that is for all people, like a light that reaches around the whole world. And he had the perfect servant in mind: his Son. He would send his Son to take on the flesh of humanity in order to extinguish the enemy of sin and death by dying on the cross and rising again. This is how God would show off his power to the whole world, not just Israel.

God's servant, Jesus, came and did his part, but now it's our turn. In the same way that the people outside of my small town needed to be saved physically, there is a lost world out there, full of people who need a savior. They are lost and drowning in sin. God's servant came and accomplished his work, but he has left us the task of reaching the nations with his light. Though it may seem like the objective is overwhelming, nothing is too big for God. Through the power of his Spirit, he equips us to step into unfamiliar situations with boldness, compassion, and humility. And through Jesus, we carry the only message that can truly bring light and hope to a world who needs rescue.

Praise God for the truth of Isaiah 49:6, that his salvation is not for a select few but for everyone, everywhere. His love breaks down barriers that separate people as he calls us to carry the light of Jesus wherever he leads. And why? For his glory. In this way he gets the great victory that he deserves. Today, let's rejoice in the prophecy of the coming Savior. Pray for a heart like Jesus. Ask him to strip away fear, to open our eyes to the people around us, and to fill us with boldness to share the light of Jesus in places that feel unfamiliar. The mission is his, the power is his, and his love is unstoppable.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord of light and love, we thank you and praise you that you didn't keep the gospel to a local few, but you sent the light of the gospel into the whole world to bring glory to your name throughout all the nations. May we now serve your purpose to bring your light to all people, that they might be saved and that you might be glorified.

TODAY'S SONG:

Let Your Kingdom Come by Sovereign Grace Music

*For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.
And they shall come and shall see my glory.*

Isaiah 66:18

Every four years, most of the countries of the world send their top athletes to a particular city, to compete in the Olympic Games. These games put people who have trained most of their lives for a specific event in competition with other athletes to see who is the best. Whether it is the summer or winter games, people around the world watch these events to see who will win and to hear the stories of what motivated them to shape their lives so drastically in order to pursue the goal of being the very best.

In our scripture today, the prophet Isaiah brings our attention to a future gathering that is dramatically different from the Olympic games. This gathering will bring people together from all nations and languages, not to focus on personal achievement but on the glory of the Living God.

In the book of Isaiah, we read a two-fold message: one about God's judgment and the other of a future hope. As Isaiah comes to the end of his book, he declares that God knows everything and that he has a plan for the future. And the end of God's plan is this: there is a time coming in which all men shall gather and see the glory of the Living God. The LORD will come in fire and in judgment on the nations, bringing justice to all, some to eternal life and some to eternal judgment. But all will see his glory!

Seeing the glory of God should cause us to worship him...and never stop. His glory is so immense, it is difficult even to contemplate. This great God has a purpose for his people, and he will bring it to completion. The gathering of nations at the end of

time will restore man's focus back to where it should be—on the one true God.

Many years after Isaiah wrote these words, the Apostle John also spoke of this time to come. Hear the song that John heard: *“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed”* (Rev. 15:3b-4).

In this Lenten season, we are particularly focusing on the cross of Jesus where the wrath of God was poured out for those he would redeem. When we see Jesus taking upon himself our sin, are we not looking at the glory of the Living God? The same glory that Isaiah foresaw in his prophecy was revealed at the cross of Christ and will be seen again at the end, when *“all nations and tongues”* will come before him and see his glory.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord of glory, we praise you for your righteous judgments. You are the perfect judge. And while you are patient to bring your judgment to the earth, it will come one day. And all people will see you in the glorious power of your righteous judgment. May we prepare our hearts for that day by repenting of our sin and trusting in your grace to us through the cross of Christ.

TODAY'S SONG:

Glorify Thy Name by Capitol Hill Baptist Church

...for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.

Luke 2:30-32

“Vedi Napoli e poi muori” or “See Naples and die” is an Italian proverb meaning that once you’ve seen something so beautiful, you’ve experienced the peak of life; there’s nothing more to seek. For Simeon in Luke 2, this was literally true. When he looks into the face of the Savior he’s been waiting for, he finds everything for which he has been searching!

Luke tells us that Simeon was “*righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him*” (Luke 2:25). In using this language of “*the consolation of Israel*,” Luke is making a connection to the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter 40, we see an announcement of comfort for Israel because a new era was coming when war would be over, sins would be paid for, and the glory of the Lord would be revealed. God himself, Isaiah prophesies, would come! That’s what Simeon was waiting for. But he wasn’t waiting needlessly or in vain. God had revealed to Simeon that “*he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ*” (Luke 2:26). He was waiting, knowing that he would see him. As Simeon finally holds the infant Jesus in his arms and looks into his face, Simeon recognizes that the era of “*the consolation of Israel*” has come.

And so Simeon responded with worship. He praised God for his faithfulness, both in fulfilling his unique promise to Simeon that he would see the Messiah and to the larger promises made through the prophets. Simeon makes the connection that there has been a divinely-orchestrated plan preparing the way for the arrival of Jesus and now it’s unfolding before his very eyes (Isaiah 9:2-6, 42:6-7, 49:6, 52:10).

But this is not just good news for Simeon and Israel—this is good news for all people. Jesus is the salvation “*prepared in the presence of all peoples*,” and the “*light for revelation to the Gentiles*.” The image of Jesus as light becomes central to Luke’s Gospel and the establishment of the early Church. Luke earlier describes Jesus as “*the sunrise...from on high*” who has come “*to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace*” (Luke 1:78-79). For the Gentiles, Jesus is the first revelation or light of God to them. Those who once had no access to God, no covenant, and no hope out of the darkness now could see by the light of Christ. For the Israelites, they previously had the promises of God, they had the Law and the Prophets, and the hope of salvation to look forward to. These were but the shadow; Jesus is the light. He is “*glory to your people Israel*,” because he is the one whom they had been waiting for! Jesus coming shows their waiting has not been in vain. Blessed are the eyes that see Christ for all he is (Luke 10:23).

The same light that broke into Simeon’s world now shines into ours. Jesus came to proclaim light both to the Israelites and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:22-23), and he calls his followers to carry that light “*in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). Those who have received the light of Christ are now to shine it, to bring the good news to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47). This is central to the mission of Christ’s Church and our mission today: *Making Christ Known!*

PRAYER PROMPT

Father of Light, thank you for sending your light into the world so that we could see his glory and that all may know the truth of your nature and power. Continue to reveal your truth to us in your word. And help us to live as the church, the light of the world, so that all may see you in us.

TODAY’S SONG:

Arise, Shine, for Your Light Has Come by Cardiphonia Music feat Jered McKenna

I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven...

Matthew 8:11

As a young man, I can confidently say that being fancy is not one of my strong suits—especially when eating. I’m not sure who invented the rule *no elbows on the table*, but I can tell you that I regularly disregard that rule. This is why I was shocked when I looked up what Jesus meant when he said, “*many will...recline at table*,” and I saw a picture of what that looks like. It is pretty much the exact opposite of what it looks like to respectfully eat today. People would lay down on the floor, resting themselves on one elbow while eating. However, back then, to recline at table was a very respectful, comfortable form of fellowship with others, especially those of higher class or status. But this verse isn’t actually about what they are doing. It’s about who they are doing it with. Who is in fellowship around the table? That’s the question.

Leading up to this passage, a centurion, a leader of Roman soldiers, is asking Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus says he will go into the centurion’s house and heal the servant, to which the centurion replies, saying he is not worthy for Jesus to enter his house. The centurion then demonstrates his faith in Jesus by stating how their authority is similar. The centurion need only say one word to his men and they follow. In the same way, Jesus need only say the word and the servant will be healed. His faith in Jesus is so astonishing that it makes Jesus marvel and state that no one in Israel claiming to be a child of God has shown that kind of faith. All of this leads to Jesus’ response in verse 11. To sum it up, Jesus responds by saying the centurion is proof that all kinds of people from all different nations will join God’s family in the fellowship of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus tells us how God fellowships with people from all nations and how God's chosen people are all descendants of his promise. When Jesus says "*many will come from east and west*" he is saying that God doesn't discriminate based on lineage, location, race, gender, etc. They are simply those who fully believe in and follow Jesus. Then Jesus explains that God's true followers will "*recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*" Jesus is saying that those who are saved through him will be joined together in the gift of fellowship with God and his people in his kingdom. As God's people, we have been promised the gift of eternal life with him. Jesus brings up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as a clear reminder of the promise God made to them. Those who follow Christ become descendants of this promise and will one day join God in heaven for eternity.

So what does this mean for us today? Above all, it is important to remind ourselves that God doesn't choose his people based on where they're from. He offers his promise to all who follow him. Jesus is telling us who have faith, like the centurion, to maintain hope in His promise, because one day we will get to claim the reward that Jesus earned for us. So the next time you get the opportunity to participate in the Lord's Supper, look around at who is there at the table. And remember that one day all the nations will gather for the great kingdom meal and recline in fellowship at our King's eternal table.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord of all the nations, how wonderful is your kingdom and your table. Thank you for inviting sinners like us to join you in fellowship. It is only through the redemptive and cleansing work of the cross that we are made acceptable in your sight. Let us draw near to you with clean hearts through repentance, that we might share in the gracious gift of fellowship with you and each other forever.

TODAY'S SONG:

Keep the Feast by Skye Peterson & Ben Shive

“At the last service, I saw a woman whom I did not know personally, but who had been attending our gatherings for a month. She looked much older than her age. Although she is only 48, she herself overcame cancer and, as a widow, raised her two sons by working as a street sweeper.

But the most striking part of her story is that when she was 11 years old, in 1988, Christ appeared to her in a dream and told her that he is the Way and the Truth. She asked: “Why *you*? Why not the prophets and leaders of my own religion—why have *you* come?”

And Christ answered: “They are dead, but I am the Living One.”

This dream touched her deeply as a child, but since her family was very religious and she was the only sister among seven brothers, she was afraid to be sincere about Christ. Surprisingly, she still read the Scripture whenever she had the chance. After many years (1988–2025), one month ago, she found us on social media and came to our service. But she later said that she was still afraid and might not be able to return. Our sisters explained to her why relatives cannot stand above God. The following week she came again and openly declared that she wanted to become a follower of Christ. Praise the Lord! Now she attends every week together with her younger son.”

Take time to pray today for this woman who stepped out in faith to become part of a local church, even when it would upset her family. Praise God because we can trust him to protect us.

WEEK 5
March 16 - 20

THE GOSPEL GOES TO THE NATIONS



..through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations...

Romans 1:5

It was a warm July day in North Africa. I was sitting on the ledge watching the sun set on a city of 22 million people with three girls from my team who had been strangers a month prior. Suddenly, the newly familiar sound of the call to prayer echoed and my heart felt heavy. This feeling of darkness felt familiar. In this city, less than five percent were followers of Jesus, and the web of Islam was everywhere. Women covered their hair, mosques were scattered throughout, prayer rugs were rolled up along the street, and the call to prayer went off five times a day. It was easy to become discouraged observing all the people trying their hardest to please their god, when my God, our God, the true God, sacrificed his only son so that we could spend eternity with him.

Our verse today comes from the Apostle Paul's greeting in his letter to the church in Rome. The Letter to the Romans is known to be rich in doctrine and truths that are foundational to our faith, and Paul's greeting is no different. In just the first four verses he notes his identity as a servant to Christ, (an apostle), declares the deity and humanity of Jesus, and identifies Jesus as the promised one from the Old Testament; all concepts which could be devotionals of their own. These doctrinal truths set up what Paul says in verse five. It is through Jesus that we receive "*grace and apostleship.*" The gift of grace means we receive eternal life with God instead of the eternal separation and wrath from God that we deserve. But we also receive apostleship which means we are commissioned. Being commissioned speaks to a specific person receiving a specific task, and in this case the idea of a commission should remind us of

The Great Commission from Matthew 28:18-20. We have been commissioned to take the news of Jesus to all people.

The purpose of this grace and apostleship given to us is “*to bring about the obedience of faith.*” This obedience is two-fold: It is out of obedience that we go to the nations, but it is also to call the nations to faith resulting in obedience. We should have a heart for the lost to know Jesus, whether here in Racine, or around the globe. Our love for Jesus and thankfulness for his work on the cross should overflow into a life of obedience. For some, this means obeying the call to live cross-culturally. For others this means faithfully sending them. Furthermore, it is for the sake of Jesus and his name that we go and call the nations to obedience. He has commissioned us to go and share his name to people who have not heard.

Paul goes on to tell us the scope of where Jesus’ name will go: to all the nations. This gospel is for all people, both Jew and Gentile, a theme that is woven throughout Romans and the entire Bible. There are 22 million people in that North African city who need to hear about the good news of Jesus. There are a billion people around the globe who need to hear. Whether God calls us to go or to faithfully send, may we all be obedient.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, we praise you for your grace in giving us what we don’t deserve. We are born in disobedience because of our sin nature. But the cross of Christ has released us from that nature and by faith we have a new nature. What a miracle that is. May you bring about in us the obedience of faith so that your name may be praised among the nations.

TODAY'S SONG:

Hear the Call of the Kingdom by Keith and Kristyn Getty

*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying,
“In you shall all the nations be blessed.”*

Galatians 3:8

Last year we surprised our kids with a trip to a dinner theater. We knew knights jousting, horses galloping, and princesses would delight our youngest two. They had no idea what we had planned. So when we crested a hill, and a castle loomed out the side of the window, they both exclaimed over the unexpected sight. They began wondering what happens in that building and speculating how much fun it would be to go there one day. From the front seat my husband and I were eager to share the surprise. Once we arrived they were shocked. The gift they didn't know they wanted, was what we had planned to share with them. Our plan was better than anything they had imagined. Now think how much more amazing God's plan is than anything we could ever imagine.

The letter to the Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul to Christians who had been converted to Christianity by his preaching of the gospel. They had since been preyed upon by false teachers who were telling the Gentile Christians they need to be circumcised to really be part of God's family. They insisted that because Abraham received God's promise, and was the father of Judaism, becoming a Jew was an essential part of belonging to God's people. This introduced some confusion into the churches of Galatia: could you truly be considered among God's people if you weren't circumcised? This displayed their misunderstanding of the nature of the promise given to Abraham and God's plan for fulfilling it.

Before Abraham was given the command to circumcise himself and his household (Genesis 17:10-17), he was called by God and given the promise that "...in you all the families of the earth shall be

blessed” (Genesis 12: 3). Abraham’s faith in God’s promise is what brought him into the relationship, not his physical act of obedience in circumcision. It was Abraham’s faith that was meant to be the example for those to come. God’s plan for redemption from sin through faith in Christ, was always meant to extend to those outside Israel. It is the complete fulfillment of God’s plan for his family to include all nations.

Paul is asserting that redemption depends on faith in God’s promises, and it has always been about all peoples. It is through Jesus that we see the fullness of this promise achieved. In Genesis 22:18 the promise to Abraham is repeated and clarified when it says *“and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”* The great revelation of scripture is that the promised offspring is Jesus Christ. Through Christ all nations are blessed. By faith in him we can be reconciled to God and brought into his family. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed by his family. God’s plan from the beginning has been greater than anyone imagined.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord of heaven and earth, we praise you for your perfect plan and promises. Your ways are higher than our ways and better than we could ever imagine. Help us to trust in you knowing that you work out the good for those who love you and obey you.

TODAY’S SONG:

Rock of Ages by The Worship Initiative

But in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Acts 10:35

There you are, in fourth grade, standing on the blacktop waiting for your name to be called. Two of your classmates are the captains in charge of picking teams for the kickball game at recess. Your palms are sweaty and you feel your heart pounding, anticipating one of them calling your name. The captains go back and forth calling out names. Will they call you first? Last? Will you be called at all?

Before the events of Acts, the Gentiles may have been feeling some of this same tension. Was this new church something they were invited to be a part of? But in Acts 10:35 the Apostle Peter calls them in, all of them at once. His message to them shares that anyone in any nation is acceptable to God, so long as they fear him and do what is right. Let's dive into this a little more.

The message of Jesus the risen Christ has just started to go out to the Gentiles after Pentecost, beginning with Philip sharing the gospel with an Ethiopian in Acts 8. In Acts 10, Peter is brought to Caesarea, which is a Roman city on the northern border of Palestine, to share the gospel with the Gentiles. He begins his address with the statement, "*God shows no partiality.*" Imagine how you would have felt as a Gentile to hear that God shows no partiality. What does that mean? Peter continues on to say that in every nation—including the one he's preaching in, and including the one you and I are in—anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. Anyone. Peter, here, is referring to the way that Gentiles would have traditionally been included in the temple worship of the God of Israel.

But what does it mean to fear God? Deuteronomy 4:24 states God is “*a consuming fire, a jealous God.*” He wants us to fear and give reverence to him alone. Hebrews 12:28b-29 says “*offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*” To fear God means to be in utter awe of him, and to give him the respect and reverence he so deserves. To be accepted by the true God, a Gentile would have to fear God, but they would also have to do what is right. What does it mean to do what is right? Going back to Deuteronomy 5, God tells us what to do in the Ten Commandments. He further goes on to say, “*And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord,*” in Deuteronomy 6:18. In other words, to do what is right means to obey God’s law. So a Gentile was accepted by the God of Israel if they properly feared him in worship and followed the commands of his word. They had to obey God’s law.

But now because of Jesus the requirements for being accepted by God have changed. It is no longer through the law that we come to God. Then and now it is through faith in Jesus. And that’s true for everyone, Jew and Gentile alike. As Peter says, “*To [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name*” (Acts 10:43). God not only accepts those who put their faith and trust in him, but also forgives their sins. This should cause us to fear him and do what is right. Those who believe in Jesus show devotion to God and exalt his name. This brings light to his goodness, grace, and love.

God is the captain, and he is calling all people to join him, not because you’ve earned it through fear and doing what is right, but because of faith.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father of Grace and Truth, you are a consuming fire worthy of fear and awe. Now because of Christ, we can draw near to you in faith, with gratitude for the new life we have with you. Help us to give you our worship with reverence toward your holy name.

TODAY’S SONG:

For the Cause by Keith and Kristyn Getty

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Ephesians 3:6

I love a good mystery story. What makes a mystery story good? I judge that on if I am able to solve it before it's fully revealed to the audience. My favorite part is the twist, the reveal of who did it and what their motive was. If the big reveal blows my mind, that is a great story. I will tell everyone I know about how amazing it is because I want them to experience exactly what I did.

In today's verse, the Apostle Paul is delivering a mystery to the early church at Ephesus that was revealed to him by the Spirit. This church was composed of both Jewish and Gentile Christians, and the gospel of Christ would be preached to the Gentiles so they too would be saved according to God's plan (Ephesians 3:8-11). The mystery that he is referring to is that it was God's will from the beginning of time to make one people for himself from all nations on earth, united together as "*fellow heirs*" by Christ "*through the gospel*." In other words, God's concealed plan before creation was to save all nations and bless them through Christ Jesus. And now that mystery has been revealed.

This letter, written while Paul is imprisoned in Rome, is one of encouragement and exhortation, beautifully articulating what our salvation in Christ means and the blessings received by those who are in him. In Christ, every believer is united with God the Father and united as a body with all other believers. In this union, both Jews and Gentiles receive the blessings of God that were promised long ago to Abraham. These two groups who once hated each other, are now one, united through their faith in the work of Jesus, adopted children of God, and receivers of every promise given us

in Christ. As a result of his amazing plan, God is exalted among the nations through the building up of the church.

So what does this mean for us today? What should we think about this mystery which was incredible when it was revealed 2,000 years ago, but maybe doesn't seem so incredible to us today? For me, I wept as I remembered when I heard the gospel preached, through the power of the Holy Spirit, I believed in Jesus and repented of my sins. I realized that God was merciful to me and didn't leave me in my sin and death, but sent his son to die for me and for all people who believe in his name. I am a Gentile who was not left in darkness. In Christ, I am an heir, part of the body of believers, and a partaker in the promises of Christ through the gospel! This was God's plan for my life before the beginning of time. How can I not praise his glorious name and tell all who will listen about the great God that he is? What about you? Have you been blessed by this glorious mystery of God's promise to redeem you and join you together with his church? How will you respond?

PRAYER PROMPT

Sovereign God of Promise, how majestic are your ways in all the earth. You have laid out your perfect plan, concealed in the beginning, but now revealed to us in Christ, that we who are far off from you can now belong to your kingdom. What a glorious truth that all who call on the name of Jesus and profess him as their Lord and Savior can be saved. Thank you for your wonderful mercies to us sinners.

TODAY'S SONG:

Come Behold The Wonderous Mystery by Matt Boswell

*Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!*

1 Chronicles 16:23

I was recently having a conversation with friends about the delicious nature of a good steak. The discussion surrounding the appropriate internal temperature of the meat came up, as it usually does. But then it took a surprising turn when one of my friends declared that a certain restaurant chain had consistently delicious steaks. They insisted that this restaurant had a high caliber of steak, both in the quality of meat and its preparation. My friend assured me that the next time I went there, it would be well worth it for me to order the steak and enjoy the meal there. They made sure to let everyone know just how good the steaks were at this chain.

In 1 Chronicles, we see God instructing his people, through David, to do a similar thing. But instead of steak, he is talking about something much greater: the glory of God. The Ark of the Covenant has just been brought back to Jerusalem. They've placed it in a tent that David pitched for it and have offered sacrifices to the Lord. The Ark of the Covenant is the symbol of God's throne in the midst of his people. The joy that David is experiencing is due to God being with his people again. After a long period of time when God symbolically was not with his people, finally the ark has returned. David writes this song of praise in response to this great event, and through his song he is instructing the people to sing, tell, and declare. Notice these commands in verses 23 and 24. This is not a directive to live quiet lives of holiness, hoping people notice and ask questions. This is a command to actively declare what God has done through various types of intentional interaction.

Look also at the scope to which God's people are to declare God's goodness. The target audience of this praise and declaration is vast. Notice the broad and all-encompassing language David is using here regarding who should hear this message. They are to declare it to the nations, among all peoples. This message about God's salvation, his glory and his marvelous works is to go to all peoples. Not merely those close to the Israelites, not just to family or friends, but to all the nations.

As we consider this directive from David regarding sharing the work of God's salvation from the Old Testament, how much more of God's glory have we witnessed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for our sins? As we have the opportunity to look back on the crucifixion of Christ, we have even more to praise God for and to declare to the world. As a part of the church, how are we at singing, telling, and declaring the wonderful works of God in salvation? Where would God have us share more clearly, directly, or consistently? Who would God have you talk to about the wonderful works God has done for you? What extravagant grace has he shown us in his Son! If we can share the good news of a good steak with a friend, how can we not sing, tell, and declare the wonderful works of God in salvation!

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, we praise you for the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is so good that we must declare it, with words and songs. Help us to daily live out the joy of our salvation with the heart of evangelism. Your work in bringing sinners to repentance and restoration deserves it.

TODAY'S SONG:

Lift High the Name of Jesus by Praise Gathering

On the evening of the first day of the year, around 10:00 p.m., one of our new believers, Matthew*, called me. His voice on the phone sounded very joyful. He was happily sharing how much the Lord loves him and how he truly is his Father. Let me explain what had happened.

For a long time, indeed, for many years, he could not find stable work. When he was an unbeliever, he repeatedly lost jobs because of his character. Although he was married and had children, he was quarrelsome and disobedient.

After coming to faith, he began to change. Now he has found a job in a roadside parking service. All day long, he stands outside and oversees the parking of cars. The management conducts inspections to ensure employees are at their posts. He was happy that the management was pleased with him and even scheduled him to work on a holiday that is paid at double rate.

Moreover, when his supervisor checked on him and noticed that he did not have gloves or a scarf, he went and bought new ones and gave them to him as a gift. The supervisor expressed gratitude for his dedication at work and gave him a warm hug.

This was completely opposite to his previous work experiences. After coming to faith, he now works steadily, the management is satisfied with him, and they do not withhold their support, even in small matters. Matthew sees the reason for all of this in Jesus Christ. It is very joyful to see that the lives of believers have truly been changed through the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Lord also uses you in this work.”

Take time to praise God for “Matthew” and the change that has occurred in his life since he started following Jesus. Reflect on and praise God for the changes in your own life since meeting Jesus. Pray that as others witness the change in our lives, they would know that it is not of our own doing, but Christ working in us.

WEEK 6
March 23 - 27

THE KINGDOM INCLUDES EVERY NATION



It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it.

Isaiah 2:2

You wake up in the morning and turn on the news. Maybe it's just another day with your average crime and acerbic political rhetoric, but not this time. This time is different—another bombing in the Middle East, another senseless school shooting in a city nearby, a massive earthquake halfway around the world causing untold suffering of folks already bearing the brunt of poverty. But as a child of the Living God, you know that God is sovereign and in control of everything—even this particular day!

Our verse for today reminds me of a challenge we as God's children face. It comes right near the beginning of the Holy Spirit's message through the prophet Isaiah, a message of judgment promised because of Judah's sin. Chapter one of Isaiah describes a local culture racked with sin and rebellion, societal decay, under the influence of pagan cultures, and rife with false piety. Sound familiar? On top of that, there was political upheaval internationally.

Things were looking bleak. Judgment was promised, but right off the bat, look what the Holy Spirit says through Isaiah. He tells his people, and us today, that in God's plan for the end of time, the temple of the Living God, where God is present, will be secured as the premier mountain among all of the alternatives that man puts forward, and indeed, all the nations will then understand and come there to worship. In other words, at the end of time, the Living God will be willingly recognized by all mankind as the true God. What a reversal for the people of God!

Now, here we are, two thousand years after the cross on which God ultimately revealed his glory to mankind, his son Jesus paying the price for our sin. How do we understand it all when we wake up on this particular day? Even though there are tragic events happening all of the time, Lord help us to recognize the profound truth of the gospel and the amazing grace that flows to God's children. Every moment of every day, good days or bad days, help us to rest in the assurance of the ultimate outcome.

Back around 740BC, when Isaiah likely began to speak God's truth to God's people, what an amazing declaration of God's plan was given to them. Now, in 2026, we see daily the results of the gospel in our own lives, and in the lives of many around us. The work of Jesus on the cross has accomplished it. The final gathering of the nations is coming!

God tells us more about this spectacular event. The "*highest of the mountains*" in Isaiah 2 is imagery which the people back in Isaiah's time would understand, but in Revelation 21:22, John shows us an even more glorious picture: "*And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.*" Don't you look forward to that day? I can only imagine!

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord, you are the Living God, and we look forward to the day when all nations will gather not at a physical temple building, but around you. You are establishing your house, building your church. Help us to work towards and serve to that end by making the gospel known to the nations.

TODAY'S SONG:

Holy Forever by CeCe Winans

At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.

Jeremiah 3:17

Think back to your childhood. Can you think of something that you hoped to receive as a gift? Maybe it was a toy or a pair of shoes. Whatever it was, you remember it even now, and you know how much you wanted it. You may have even said, “If I could just have that, I’d be happy.” For me, it was a skateboard. I was all in on the idea of skateboarding every day, learning tricks, and really having it become part of me. But that skateboard wound up in the corner of the garage. Perhaps your treasure ended up like my skateboard and was ultimately forgotten.

In our verse today from Jeremiah, we encounter a people that had forgotten and disregarded the most important gift they could ever receive, the presence of the LORD. As a result, the bulk of Jeremiah’s message to Israel is a promise of judgment. He was delivering an unpopular message to a people none too excited to hear it.

Israel was to be a nation set apart from the rest of the world—they were God’s chosen people. However, they had abandoned God’s righteous rule over them. They not only turned away from God and ignored his commandments, but they also adopted the false gods of neighboring nations—powerless inventions that the Israelites knew their God had previously crushed. God even compares Israel to one who is unfaithful in marriage. He asks them, “*Where have you not been ravished?...Yet...you refuse to be ashamed*” (Jeremiah 3:2-3).

When I see the depths of the Israelites’ sinfulness, I am taken aback. Sometimes it is easy for us to think of a sin or two with

which we struggle, but we neglect to see that every aspect of our lives is tarnished with the effect of sin. Lord, help us to recognize just how much we may be like the Israelites in Jeremiah's day.

But just when it seemed hopeless for Israel, God showed mercy. He interrupted the pattern of judgment with a call to repentance and a promise of a future where he would be in their presence once again. And what is truly remarkable is that God spoke of a day when not only faithless Israel would be redeemed, but a day when all the nations of the world would be present. God promised that the very nations that had led Israel away from God to embrace idol worship would one day join in true worship in the presence of the one true God.

As Christians today, we have the benefit of being on the other side of the cross. Christ's blood shed at Calvary provides reconciliation with the Living God. And furthermore, we have the privilege of bringing the news of this present and future reality to the nations. Our passage serves as a fantastic reminder for us today. We, too, have a promise of a future day when all the nations will gather in the presence of the LORD and praise his name with a pure heart. His presence will be a treasure that will never fade, will never find its way to the bottom of the bin. It is a treasure that will endure forever.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord God, thank you for your presence. It is the most important thing to us. When you are near, Lord, we are alive. Apart from you we only have death. And thank you that your presence is something available to all people everywhere. May the nations turn from evil and find you, the one true God.

TODAY'S SONG:

Christ Forever by Grace Church Songs

*And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and
shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst,
and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.*

Zechariah 2:11

Earlier this year I decided to remodel our condominium. It started with a decision to replace the flooring in the kitchen and pantry, living room, dining room and a storage closet. That good idea led to a painting project before starting the flooring. The painting expanded to the loft area as the open concept floor plan has walls that included the loft. I finally started to rip up the old flooring and discovered a significant portion of sub-floor full of mold and dry rot that crumbled at the slightest touch. I had to cut out concrete and replace the plywood subfloor before I could install new flooring. New interior doors and baseboards were added to the project so bedrooms and bathrooms were now included as well. Paint, flooring, vanity and shower. It's overwhelming to have every room completely disrupted, everything out of place. I was thinking, "Why did I start this project? It's never going to be finished!" I wanted to give up, but I couldn't.

I wonder if Zechariah may have felt the same. He had returned to Jerusalem with a remnant of Israel after 70 years of captivity in Babylon. The temple, which represented the place of God's dwelling with his chosen people Israel, was in ruins along with the rest of the city. The rebuilding project would be overwhelming. During the first few years after they returned, the temple foundation was laid, but that is as far as they got. After 20 years of stagnation, the people had become discouraged and apathetic about the project. Why continue? Because, Zechariah reminds them, the temple isn't just about them. It's about the fulfillment of God's promise. God would dwell with them and bring the nations together to dwell with him.

But how would this happen? Zechariah was looking forward to a future day. A day of great hope, the day when God's anointed, the Messiah would come to physically dwell with them and reveal himself to Israel. At his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus presents himself to the nation of Israel as their Messiah in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. Jesus is fully aware that he will suffer, be crucified, and die for the sins of mankind. In his death he would become the blessing to the nations, paying the penalty for sin, dwelling with those who believe in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this life we may feel overwhelmed and uncertain about the tasks we are called to fulfill. On our own we fail and fall short. Marriage, children, living faith-filled lives and being witnesses of the gospel to our neighbors can all be overwhelming. But God is true to his promises. He will bring to pass what he said he would. The ultimate fulfillment of this verse is still the future for us. The Apostle John writes in Revelation 21:2-3 *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”* God began this work of making a people for himself to dwell with and be their God. He started it, and he will finish it. Let us continue to move forward trusting in his promises as Zechariah did.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father, your promises are sure. You do not fail to fulfill every single promise that you made. Help us to trust and obey your word, knowing that what you did on the cross was just the beginning and one day by faith we will join you in the eternal city.

*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.*

Psalm 2:8

We can often experience that sinking sensation when hearing world news updates. Fierce nations raging against one another seems too brutal and too regular to watch. We desperately long for an authority to usher in peace for the nations. With stirring anxiety, we prayerfully ask the Lord to grant this authority to leaders we trust, but our ask may appear unanswered. Comfort is found in knowing that this authority has already been offered—but not to any human ruler or politician. Psalm 2:8 reminds us of who has the right to ask for the throne that every nation and ruler will bow to.

In our verse for today, we hear the prophetic voice of God the Father as an invitation to his Son, the Christ, the Anointed King. In verse 6, we read of how God has put his anointed king on the throne in Zion, the holy city. Then, God says to the king, in verse 7, *“You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”* And now that his rule is established, the Father demonstrates his sovereign power over wicked nations by freely offering control to Christ. We see a wondrous future where God’s appointed ruler is exalted in authority and has defeated the wicked rulers.

What a joyous life on earth it would be to be rid of sinful leaders over the warring nations. What a blessing it would be to have a perfect king reigning and leading all peoples of Earth in perfect harmony. A longing in our hearts for this peace can lead us to naturally wonder if this truly is within reach. So what does the Son need to do to usher in this glorious state of earthly reign? Simply ask.

With hours closing in before his impending death, Jesus, the Christ, reveals the deep desires of his heart through a prayer. In anticipation of the cross, he asks his father for the spiritual preservation and sanctification of his earthly followers. He then expands that request to a future state saying, “*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*” (John 17:20-21). This prayer is for us as believers because we are part of the nations that he has been given authority to claim as his own. Christ was looking to us as his future heritage to be united to him. As children of God, we are the king’s heritage, an inheritance that Christ has asked us to belong to him.

When we see the free offer from the Father in Psalm 2:8, and when we are reminded of the heart of Christ, we can be filled with an expected hope. We can take great encouragement in the reminder that God is in control over the nations, and Christ will reign from end to end of the Earth. This Lenten season, take pleasure in remembering that he has asked the Father that we would belong to him, and that the Father has granted that we get to be a part of that heritage as Christ’s beloved possession.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father God, thank you that you are sovereign over all your creation and that you have set your Son Jesus Christ as King over all things. Thank you that you gave your Son the authority to ask for us to be his and that he has claimed us as his own. Keep us in his grace. Let us trust in him as the nations around us rage, knowing that one day he will return and bring everlasting peace.

TODAY'S SONG:

O Church Arise (Arise, Shine) by Keith and Kristyn Getty

And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:14

Rollercoasters fall into one of two camps for most—love or hate. Whichever side you fall, the reason is likely the same: because your world gets turned upside-down, while being completely out of control. For the lovers, the corkscrews and loops simulate real world challenges and adversities, as if to say, “Bring it on!” In contrast, the less enthusiastic list the plausible catastrophes that lie between the start and end of the ride. You can avoid these alleged amusement rides, yet life will frequently remind you that you are not in control. With regularity, we should come to expect being thrown for loops.

Daniel’s world was certainly turned upside-down when his city, Jerusalem, was sieged and destroyed. He and other members of the royal family were exiled to Babylon, where they became royal servants. The discouragement and despair would cripple most, yet Daniel’s trust in the LORD remained true. The book’s opening six chapters each record unique accounts of the LORD’s faithfulness, despite the dire circumstances his people faced. Then at chapter seven, the rollercoaster adds the greatest thrill yet.

The chapter records a vision regarding the ongoing oppression to expect from nations that will rise to power, one after another. This apocalypse, or revealing vision, provides the reader a glimpse behind the divine curtain, seeing that God is still in control. Such visions feel like the most extreme rollercoaster rides given their vivid imagery that raise the hairs on your neck. Three ghastly, though clearly supernatural, beasts rise up, only to be followed by a terri-

fying, yet indescribable beast, devouring everyone coming into its path. Whoever this beast represents, it clearly is an enemy to all.

This vision would squash any hope of restoration were it to end at verse eight. Yet God comes in verse nine to bring forth his righteous judgment on this vicious beast and destroy it for all eternity. With the beast's defeat, the LORD brings forth "*one like a son of man*," (Daniel 7:13) who ascends on the clouds and ultimately onto his eternal throne over all of heaven and earth. Verse fourteen richly declares the extent and eternality of the reign of this promised king. This is a forever kingdom that has dominion over all peoples. We have the great fortune of seeing what Daniel never did: the kingdom of Jesus Christ coming into the world.

You and I live in the light shone through this promise. God's redemptive purpose was never to be limited to one nation, but for all. Therefore we shouldn't shun anyone who seeks this kingdom. We are to participate in making Christ's name known to the very ends of the earth. We enjoy a glimpse of this kingdom here and now, yet this taste only precedes the feast that is to come. Let us enjoy the spoils of Christ's victory, inviting people of every family, tribe, nation and language to join us.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom that will never fade away. Forgive us for serving the kingdom of this world, which will fade. None of it will last. But yours will remain. Help us to stay committed and devoted to your kingdom and to spreading its good news to all people.

TODAY'S SONG:

Christus Victor (Amen) by Bryan Fowler, Terrian

In the evening, after a tiring day of ministry, we went with my family to a nearby café for dinner. A waiter — a young man around 23–24 years old — was serving with a smile and great enthusiasm. It felt as if he wanted to get acquainted. I gave him that opportunity, and as soon as we introduced ourselves, he asked an unusual question: “What is happiness for you?” What could be more wonderful than such an unexpected question to begin a conversation and share the Good News?!

After finishing dinner, we returned to the same café together with our volunteer servant. We had a very warm and heartfelt conversation, and when we parted, we hugged. He has not accepted Christ yet. But we hope that his heart will open to the Gospel.

Take time to pray for this young man. Pray that he would turn his life to follow Christ, and that he would be a great witness for God. Pray for wide open opportunities to share the good news about Jesus with those in your neighborhoods, workplaces, restaurants where you eat, and stores where you shop.

WEEK 7

March 30 - April 3

THE FULFILLMENT IN GLORY



HOW TO ENTER INTO HOLY WEEK

As we draw near to the conclusion of our Lenten journey, our focus naturally narrows. We find ourselves tracing the final steps of Jesus—the shadow of the cross, the silence of the tomb, and the personal grace we claim through his victory. But as we enter Holy Week, we are invited to lift our eyes from the path directly in front of us to behold a much greater and more glorious horizon.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was never intended to be a merely private or localized event. It was God's decisive, cosmic move to redeem the nations and reconcile a fractured world to himself. We must remember that God sent his Son into the world because he loved the world. His plan of redemption has always been about calling a people to himself—a holy people gathered from every tribe, nation, and language to belong to him forever.

We often measure the death and resurrection of Christ by its personal impact. We look at the empty tomb and rightly marvel, *Jesus did that for me!* It is a glorious truth that your sins are covered by the blood of the Lamb. Yet, there is an even more expansive truth to consider. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to be baptized, he cried out, “*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). Jesus’ blood was shed not just for your sins, but for the sins of the world.

Therefore, Holy Week is not just about God's transforming work in our personal reality; it is about God's transforming work in a global reality.

Remember the story didn't end at the empty tomb. Forty days after exiting the grave, Jesus ascended the mountain top where he declared to his disciples:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:18-19).

Because of his obedience unto death, the Father has given the Son authority over all creation. He now sends us out—not just as recipients of grace, but as participants in his mission to gather his people from every corner of the earth into one holy church.

As you enter this week of remembrance, consider the vast world God is redeeming through the Gospel. Jesus died and rose for a purpose greater than any one individual. God's goal in redemption is nothing less than global transformation—a transformation that will be consummated when he returns and makes all things new.

Let this week's devotions serve to help your heart unite with God's heart for the nations. Let us celebrate a Savior who is not only our personal hope, but the hope of the world.

PREPARE YOUR HEART FOR RESURRECTION SUNDAY

Read the following:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20



...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:10-11

Choosing a baby name can be both exciting and daunting. It's the first decision a parent makes which determines a substantial part of their little one's identity and is with them forever. Names can reveal family heritage, love for a relative, or even a parent's favorite author. My name came from a St. Patrick's Day poster that my brother saw in school. It read *Erin Go Bragh* which means *Ireland Forever*. My mother chose the name Kirk for a boy. And if that name triggers thoughts of a popular sci-fi captain, you'd be right. Let's just say I'm thankful to be a girl!

In Philippians 2, the Apostle Paul writes about the one who was given the most significant and recognizable name in all history. This name was granted by God himself to the only one who had the power to carry the weight associated with it. The one who bears this name embodies righteous humility and would ultimately sit at God's right hand. This is the name of Jesus.

But why is the name of Jesus so powerful? Let's back up to verse 5 where Paul begins what is often referred to as the *hymn of Christ*. Here Paul composes a song about the selfless and obedient service of Jesus Christ to God the Father. Before Jesus was born in a manger, he existed "*in the form of God*" (v. 6). Yet, he willingly "*emptied*" and "*humbled himself*" "*taking the form of a servant (or slave)*" and became human (vv. 6-8). Jesus knew that his earthly life would end in the inhumane and torturous "*death on a cross*" (v. 8) at the hands of the very ones he created. The good news is that the life of Jesus does not end in death. Paul's hymn crescendos to the resurrection and exaltation where God raises Jesus to his rightful position and

gives him “*the name that is above every name*” (v. 9). Paul’s contrast of Jesus’ humiliation to elevation is meant to strike the hearts of his beloved Philippian church, not only to gird their faith, but to exemplify the meaning of loving others more than themselves.

So what does it mean? It means that with this name comes immeasurable authority. “*God has put all things in subjection under his feet*” (1 Corinthians 15:27) “*so that*” this name will one day cause everyone “*in heaven and on earth and under the earth*” to bow and declare that “*Jesus Christ is Lord.*” All of this culminates in a magnificent finale, “*to the glory of God the Father.*” God is exalted when all nations, all people acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord! And this is God’s ultimate goal for humanity. He wants us to bow at the name of Jesus. He is working all things to the point that when they hear that name, every person everywhere will stop what they are doing and bow in worship.

One day we will all bow and say that he is Lord. What will be the posture of your heart on that day—humble adoration or fear and indignation? The answer to that question is determined by the posture of your heart today. How do you respond to the name of Jesus today? Is he your Lord today?

PRAYER PROMPT

Father God, we rejoice in your name and praise you for sending your Son into the world. Being truly God he emptied himself to become truly man and died on the cross, taking our sin so that you could raise him to glorious life. Help us to bow before him now and confess his Lordship over our lives today.

TODAY'S SONG:

Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11) by Seeds Kids Worship

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 5:9-10

Have you ever been in a time of worship where people were praising Jesus in a language different than yours?

I recently spent a week in Johannesburg, South Africa with believers from all over the world, people from every inhabited continent. As we offered up our worship to our King, at times praising him in our mother-tongue, I couldn't help but feel like we had a glimpse into what heaven will sound like.

In today's passage, through the Apostle John's vision, we are brought into the throne room of heaven. John sees a book in the hand of him who sits on the throne which no one is worthy to open. Then, he sees the Lamb that was slain come forward and take the scroll. As the elders sing their new song, we are reminded that this Lamb, Jesus, our Messiah, has been slain in order to purchase *“people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”* And we are also reminded that these people will be *“a kingdom and priests to our God.”*

This beautiful passage of scripture focuses on the slain Lamb. The Lamb, standing as though it had been slain (Revelation 5:6), is a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross. In the old covenant, every priest stood *“daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins,”* but only cover them (Hebrews 10:11). But here, we are reminded that the blood which Jesus shed on the cross was the final sacrifice needed. By his shed blood, our sins are forgiven, once and for all. No longer is a priest needed to slaughter an animal and sprinkle its blood on the altar

for the atonement of our sin. And not only that, but by his shed blood, Jesus has now ransomed us—“*from every tribe and language and people and nation*” to be “*a kingdom and priests to our God*” whose exclusive purpose will be to worship our King.

Without a king, there is no kingdom. Jesus, the King has purified us by his blood and has brought the nations to him. He is being worshipped because he has overcome death and has unified us from all over the world. Our purpose, as the kingdom of priests, is to worship him and exalt his name.

Let us not wait until we are in the throne room of heaven to exalt Jesus’ name among the nations. Are we living today in a manner that expresses our gratitude for the slain Lamb who has taken away our sins? In the letter of Hebrews it says, “*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*” (Hebrews 12:28), and “*Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name*” (Hebrews 13:15). May we, as a kingdom of priests, not wait for the throne room of heaven, but start right now to proclaim his excellencies among the nations.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord Jesus, you are the Lamb that was slain, and the one worthy of our worship. We bow before you now in praise to bring honor to your name. Fix our eyes on your eternal kingdom that we might live in the glorious reality of our future place before your throne. And help us to exalt you now to the nations.

TODAY'S SONG:

*Is He Worthy?*³ by Andrew Peterson, Chris Tomlin

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”]

Revelation 7:9-10

The day my younger sister left for basic training hit me harder than I expected. I tried to keep it together as we hugged goodbye, but this was the longest we would ever be apart. What made it even harder was knowing I wouldn't be able to call her, text her, or even hear her voice for weeks. Every day I checked the mailbox, waiting in anticipation for any letter. I longed for the day we would see each other again—face to face. That ache taught me something: when you love someone, you can endure the silence, but you never stop longing for the reunion.

In today's passage, John sees a vision of a reunion of the nations we should all look forward to: a crowd waving palm branches, gathered before the throne. At the center is Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, the one who made salvation and the reunion possible. John's vision should remind us how that salvation came. It wasn't through a powerful conquering king, it was through a meek sacrificial lamb, the true Passover Lamb.

At the first Passover, God told his people to sacrifice a lamb and mark their doorposts with its blood (Exodus 12). Death passed over them, and their journey to freedom from slavery in Egypt began. Once they were free, they celebrated how God had rescued them. But their waiting wasn't over. Every Passover that followed was a reminder of what God had done—and a picture of the greater Lamb still to come.

Now when we look to the future in Revelation 7:9-10, this is a celebration that involves people from every culture and language.

And they're all waving palm branches, just like those laid before Jesus when he entered Jerusalem. But this time, it's not confusion or misplaced hope—it's celebration! They're not crying, "Save us now!" They're rejoicing over the salvation which has already come through the Lamb. The waiting is over. The longing is fulfilled. Someday all of our anticipation will lead to rejoicing in what Jesus has done because it will all be complete, and his people will be complete.

When my sister finally came home, the anticipation gave way to joy. We didn't need to wonder about her anymore. Now we can just celebrate the fact that we are finally together. What about you? Of all the things you look forward to, is celebrating with Jesus one of them? If you've ever felt the ache of separation, you're not alone. The people of God have always been waiting, trusting, holding on in the in-between. But the good news is that the waiting won't last forever. How are you living while you wait? Are you drawing closer to the Lamb? Pointing others to him? Worshiping him now for what he has done and will do?

The day that we are waiting for is coming when we will join that great crowd robed in salvation, palm branches in hand, worshiping the Lamb who never left us. That is something to celebrate.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord of our salvation, we rejoice in you that you have conquered sin and death by the cross and empty tomb, and we now wait in eager anticipation of the day we join you and all the redeemed to worship the Lamb who sits on the throne. Worthy is he of all praise and honor and glory and power.

TODAY'S SONG:

Rise with the Sun by CityALight

*By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth
will bring their glory into it.*

Revelation 21:24

I've always loved music. For as long as I can remember, I've been humming tunes and singing songs. When God opened my eyes and saved me, my humming and singing became a way to worship God. Through singing my worship I'm reminded of who God is, of who I am, and of the kingdom to come. This kind of worship is truly a privilege and a gift.

In today's passage we see worship on an entirely different level as the Apostle John is given a vision of the new Jerusalem where God will dwell eternally with his people (Revelation 21:3). The massive city radiates with the glory of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, its lamp; and John sees the nations walking by that light. These nations who once dwelled in darkness and were not God's people are now being led by the very presence of God. John tells us that not only will nations walk by God's light, but that the kings of the earth will bring their glory into the city. These kings represent God's redeemed people who are given titles of distinction and are appointed rulers. The word *glory* here means wealth, splendor, treasures, and tributes. John wants us to picture a heavenly parade of redeemed people from every tongue, tribe, and nation bringing their diverse splendor, cultural contributions, and national specialties into the holy city as acts of worship.

King Solomon prophesied this when he wrote: "*May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust! May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!*"

(Psalm 72:8-11). The places Solomon noted represent the Gentile worlds known to the Israelites of his day: rich, poor, near, far, civilized, uncivilized. No one was kept from worshiping the king! What glory they brought didn't really matter. It was their acknowledgment of the king and their submission to his rule that was important.

In the New Testament, Matthew recorded an account of Gentile kings coming to worship the king of the Jews that Solomon prophesied about. Matthew wanted everyone to know that this king that is worthy of all worship was Jesus. *“Behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him’ ... They saw the child ... and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh”* (Matthew 2:1b-2, 11b).

In this city where the gates are always open and where there is no night, worship will be made new and will come from purified people with pure motives. *“And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new...these words are trustworthy and true”* (Revelation 21:5). If you've placed your faith in Christ, let John's vision fill you with hope. You'll be participating with the nations and kings in glorifying God. Can you imagine? It really will simply be all about the redeemed coming together and worshiping God for his indescribable gifts. Let's let his light shine and guide the nations to that glorious throne.

PRAYER PROMPT

Lord of Heaven, your light shines so brightly and causes the world to come to you in worship. We pray that your kingdom would come and that your will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. May your light shine through us that we might glorify you with our worship both now and forever.

TODAY'S SONG:
Behold Our God by Sovereign Grace Music

*Also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.
The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Revelation 22:2

My childhood best friend had a huge evergreen tree in her yard. Beneath the boughs of this gigantic tree was a large open space that was perfect for cultivating childhood memories. Under that tree our imaginations were free to dream of tea parties and clubs, secret hideouts and shelter for orphans and shipwreck survivors. Possibly more than anything else, that tree represents all my memories of this childhood friendship.

In Revelation 22, we see another tree that symbolizes a much more important relationship. Here John sees the Tree of Life, a tree whose name instantly recalls memories of a perfect beginning followed quickly by a devastating curse and damaged relationship between God and His people (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-23). This was the tree that God set under guard when he sent Adam and Eve out of Eden, lest they eat of it and live forever in their fallen state. But the Tree of Life would not be guarded forever. Moving forward in Israel's history, we see another vision of this tree. Ezekiel describes a tree nearly identical to that of John's vision in Revelation 22 (Ezekiel 47:12). In both visions, we discover that this tree is not just a tree that offers eternal life, it offers restoration. This tree symbolizes hope for God's people to not only do what they were created to do, but to thrive in forever fruitfulness as they are rooted in God.

John tells us that this tree bears 12 kinds of fruit. The number 12 in Revelation is used as a symbol of the fullness and completeness of God's people. Thereby, we understand that this tree will bring full and complete healing to the nations, to the fullness and complete number of every single person called into restoration with

God. This chosen people, promised to Abram in Genesis 12, is now complete. Not one is missing. Every single person whose name is written in the Book of Life, from each and every tribe, tongue, and nation make up this city of people thriving eternally in the presence of God. This tree holds the hope, the life, the history of God's people from creation to the patriarchs, through the kingdom and the prophets, made possible by the promised one in whose presence this tree stands. The ministry of the Church over centuries and millennia working in the power of the Spirit has all come to fruition.

By symbolizing restoration between God and his people this tree should also remind us of another tree. Today especially calls us to remember that "*[Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree ... By his wounds you have been healed*" (1 Peter 2:24). Revelation 22:3 sings triumphant as it summarizes what this healing of the nations truly brings. The curse is broken and all of God's people, representing all the nations, are healed from their raging and strife. People from every nation who once were united only by their sin, will now be united together around a tree that reminds them of all that their Lord has done. The result will be the worship and exaltation of the one who sits on the throne and of the Lamb who suffered on a tree of death so that we will finally gain eternal healing around the Tree of Life.

But we do not have to wait until that day to remember what Christ has accomplished or to worship him for it. Take today to remember and rejoice in how Christ reconciles and restores those dead in their sin into fruitful everlasting saints.

PRAYER PROMPT

Father of Life, thank you for providing for your people a tree of healing and reconciliation. Thank you that your Son hung on that tree of death so that we could once again access the tree of life.

TODAY'S SONG:

Power of the Cross by Shane & Shane

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Thank you,
The Lenten Devotional Team

*“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”*

Psalm 46:10

