

# Prayerful Reflections for Lent 2026



Week 2

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## Week 2

Edited by Julia L. Styles  
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This is part 2 of a six-part Lent reflection series, divided by week. You can download other weeks at [www.prayerfulreflections.com](http://www.prayerfulreflections.com)

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## About Prayerful Reflections

*Prayerful Reflections* is a daily resource for connecting with God and the broader Christian community during the season of Lent, the 45 days leading up to Easter. Christians around the world practice Lent as a way to meditate/reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how Jesus influences our lives today.

Inspired by the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*, or sacred listening, each daily reflection will be an opportunity to **Read** the Bible, **Reflect** on the message, **Respond** to what we have heard, and **Rest** in the love of God through prayer. This devotional could be read independently or with a community. If you would like to connect virtually, the reflections are posted daily at [www.prayerfulreflections.com](http://www.prayerfulreflections.com). Unlike past volumes, this Lent's *Prayerful Reflections* will be published each week as separate editions, emailed to subscribers, and found online at [www.prayerfulreflections.com](http://www.prayerfulreflections.com).

I publish Prayerful Reflections to share my thoughts about God and uplift female theologians. This devotional features women who are pastors, authors, teachers, and community leaders from diverse backgrounds across North America and Europe. What unites us is our devotion to Jesus and our call to share God's insights through scripture. Though written by women, this devotional is meant for everyone. I extend my gratitude to all the women whose contributions made this collection possible.

# The Call to a Larger Life

A Reflection for the second Sunday of Lent by Rev. Dr. Laura Truax

Lectionary reading for 03/01/2026: [Genesis 12:1-4a](#), [Psalm 121](#), [Romans 4:1-5, 13-17](#), [John 3:1-17](#) or [Matthew 17:1-9](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Genesis 12:1-3

## Read

### **Genesis 12:1-3 NRSV**

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.*

*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.*

*I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him.*

## Reflect

The other day, I went into Subway and ordered what I always order at Subway: *Spicy Italian. On wheat*. I can't remember the last time I changed up my menu order. I went home by the route I generally take. I made a dinner for guests—a sheet-pan supper of marinated shawarma chicken—that is in my regular rotation. I called it a day and went to bed at roughly the same time I generally retire. A regular day.

Not all my days are routine. But the vast majority are. I bet yours are too.

There is that well-known story about how Albert Einstein kept his wardrobe simple: 4 black pants, 4 black shirts. He didn't want to waste any energy on small decisions. I like to think that much of my routine is motivated by something similar. I want to give my best energy to a higher ordering of things. You too, perhaps?

This is the sensitivity I bring to the great call of Abraham story found in our text of Genesis 12. It shares similarities with various "Call" stories in literature. An individual is addressed by a power or a person beyond themselves. That voice invites them on an unknown journey (Abraham in Genesis 12) or on an unknown way of living (as Jesus with Nicodemus in John). The divine invitation is sometimes accompanied by a warning: "You will go where you don't want to go," as Jesus told Peter in John 21:18. The call even extends to Jesus himself, as he wrestles with its implications: "*Let this cup pass from me!*" in Matt. 26:39. They are all invitations to a larger life. The clear and uncompromising reality in all these passages is that the life we long for requires us to walk unknown paths and make *uncomfortable choices*. Life with God in the Spirit demands a certain *unknowing* on our part. A particular *surrender to choices* that are not our own.

Last week, I followed a nudge and texted a family member I hadn't spoken to since January 2020. We have some different views, and I needed some space. But recently I became aware that my space was just run of the mill routine. I was operating in my comfort zone.

We have started a dialogue. It's uncharted territory in some ways. And that's the point. Sure, this is a small action. But it's gotten me thinking about something that would be pretty big for me: offering our little coach house as a sanctuary to a landscaper I know. I don't know what will come of that either, but I sense it is another nudge. I want to be where God is calling me. That is what Abraham wanted, too. He left everything he knew to follow.

## Respond

Listen. Get still enough to feel what is uncomfortable in you. Sense what is unknown and scary. When you feel the nudge to move, then do so.

## Rest

*We give you habits, our routines, our comfortable ways, and our well-considered opinions. We hand over our established views, our curated books, and our rich circles of friends. Take us to the unknown. Lead us to the places where you want us to stretch out and offer shade.*



## About the Author

Laura Sumner Truax is a writer, a minister, and increasingly, a socially engaged citizen grounded in the practices of centering prayer and meditation. She leads an online daily practice on the [Meditation Chapel platform](#). She is a theologian-in-residence at the virtual upstart Olive Tree community and a member of the [Red Letter Christians](#) community. Laura posts on Facebook, and Instagram [@freerangechristian](#)

# Being with God in Our Discontent

## A Reflection for Monday, March 2 by Tori Mack

Lectionary reading for 03/02/2026: [Psalm 128; Numbers 21:4-9; Hebrews 3:1-6;](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Numbers 21:4-9

### Read

#### **Numbers 21:4-9 NRSV**

<sup>4</sup> From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom, but the people became discouraged on the way. <sup>5</sup> The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." <sup>6</sup> Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

### Reflect

Life is not always easy. Seasons of discontent come. It is the season I have found myself in. I'm not sure how I got here, but it's here. The things that used to be a part of my rhythm are now irritating me, and if I'm honest, starting to feel like drudgery. As I read this passage, I resonated with the Israelites. They have been journeying with God and are growing weary. Suffice it to say that their relationship with the Edomites is "complicated" so they are taking the long way around the land of Edom. Their impatience grows in the wilderness, with no food and no water. Complete discontentment among the people is so great that God hears of it and responds by sending a poisonous snake. This is not the ideal response that someone would want from God.

I want God to do something else about my discontentment, not that! This response brings me awareness that God notices my discontent. Periods of discontent can be seen as an invitation to notice when we have gone too far. My grumbling is not appreciated. Rather, it is a distraction from the bigger goal. Why are people told to look at the poisonous snake and receive life? I wonder if this is a way for them to recenter their thoughts and minds on what is more important—obedience and trust in God. I can't say for certain, but my childhood taught me that there was nothing like the sting of a punishment to remember why a different path is not worthwhile. But as a parent, I also understand that the effect of consequences can offer healing and growth.

Discomfort can be an invitation to grow or change. Rather than resist or ignore the discomfort, take this season of Lent to lament.

## Respond

This season of Lent offers us space to sit with our discontentment. I offer some questions that may guide you in this season.

- Are there areas of your life that feel spiritually dry or stagnant?
- Can you pinpoint when you first started feeling this-what was happening in your life?
- Can you trust God's presence with you in this season?

## Rest

*Holy One, You are the God of all seasons. When I am feeling empty, I trust you to fill me with hope. When I feel lost, may I feel your presence. Help me to trust you to be with me in joy, sorrow, melancholy, or discontent. Amen.*

## About the Author



Tori Mack is a spiritual director who is passionate about accompanying people on their journey with the Divine. If you're looking for her, you can email her at [mrsytmack@gmail.com](mailto:mrsytmack@gmail.com) or find her on a train in search of her next museum adventure.

# God is creating – Pay Close Attention Now!

A Reflection for March 3 by Rev. Dr. Cynthia P. Stewart

Lectionary Readings: [Psalm 128](#); [Isaiah 65:17-25](#); [Romans 4:6-13](#)

Selected passage for today's reflection: Isaiah 65:17-25

Read

## Isaiah 65:17-25 – Message Bible

*New Heavens and a New Earth*

<sup>17-25</sup> "Pay close attention now:

I'm creating new heavens and a new earth.

All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain are things of the past, to be forgotten.

Look ahead with joy.

Anticipate what I'm creating:

I'll create Jerusalem as sheer joy,  
create my people as pure delight.

I'll take joy in Jerusalem,  
take delight in my people:

No more sounds of weeping in the city,  
no cries of anguish;

No more babies dying in the cradle,  
or old people who don't enjoy a full lifetime;

One-hundredth birthdays will be considered normal—

anything less will seem like a cheat.

They'll build houses  
and move in.

They'll plant fields  
and eat what they grow.

No more building a house

that some outsider takes over,  
No more planting fields  
that some enemy confiscates,  
For my people will be as long-lived as trees,  
my chosen ones will have satisfaction in  
their work.

They won't work and have nothing come of  
it,

they won't have children snatched out  
from under them.

For they themselves are plantings blessed  
by God,

with their children and grandchildren  
likewise God-blessed.

Before they call out, I'll answer.

Before they've finished speaking, I'll have  
heard.

Wolf and lamb will graze the same meadow,  
lion and ox eat straw from the same  
trough,

but snakes—they'll get a diet of dirt!  
Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill  
anywhere on my Holy Mountain,"  
says God.

## Reflection



I was visiting the Art Institute of Chicago this past weekend, and these two images stood out the most as I began to reflect on Lent and the scripture for today.

Take a moment to look at the two pictures and write down words or thoughts that come to mind. What resonates with you during this second week of Lent?

Now, read the passage and notice how Isaiah has a vision of what the world can look like, starting with “Pay close attention now.” This is the purpose of Lent: to take the time to stop, reflect, spend time with God, pay close attention, and listen to what God is saying.”

Begin to ponder things of the past that you may not have let go of and given to God. Consider why you are holding on. Isaiah is letting us know that once we let go of the past and allow forgiveness to take place in our hearts, we will experience joy and see the new things God is creating.

Look at the list of Isaiah’s vision: no more weeping, anguish, no more premature death of babies, elders will live a long life, home ownership, planting of food that you can grow and eat, work satisfaction, blessed children and grandchildren, and God hearing and answering prayers. These are probably things we have not taken the time to reflect on, but now, during this Lenten season, you have the opportunity to reflect.

## Respond

Now that you have seen Isaiah's list, what will you add for yourself for the vision you are seeking during this Lenten season? What is the joy you have been longing to experience?

Take another look at the photos and write your thoughts in comparison to what you wrote in the beginning of the reflection. What now resonates with you, and what do you believe God is speaking?

## Rest

*God, as we reflect today during this Lenten season, may we feel your presence and allow the peace of God to encamp around us. Continue to give us the strength to seek your face daily and to hear the still small voice of your Holy Spirit leading and guiding us. Bless us through this journey, and may we feel sheer joy in our lives. In Jesus Name, Amen*

## About the author



Rev. Dr. Cyntia P. Stewart is a minister at New Life Covenant Church Southeast in Chicago, IL. She has been leading a women's 5am prayer call each Wednesday since 2018. She works at Illinois Institute of Technology and is adjunct faculty at Loyola University Chicago. Her passion is to expose students to the diversity of Chicago neighborhoods, because experiential learning prepares them for life after college.

# From Stone to Flesh: The Journey of Healing and Grace

A Reflection for Wednesday, March 4 by Rev. Coreenna Boucher Hoyt

Lectionary reading for 03/08/2023: [Psalm 128](#); [Ezekiel 36:22-32](#); [John 7:53-8:11](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Ezekiel 36:22-32

## Read

**Ezekiel 26:23-26,29-32** NRSV (emphasis added)

<sup>23</sup> I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations and which you have profaned among them, and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. <sup>24</sup> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> **A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.**

<sup>29</sup> I will save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. <sup>30</sup> I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant, so that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. <sup>31</sup> Then you shall remember your evil ways and your dealings that were not good, and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. <sup>32</sup> It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and dismayed for your ways, O house of Israel.

## Reflect

It was 2 a.m. as I sat in silence with a distraught high school friend when she suddenly whispered, "I don't want God to give me a heart of flesh; my heart of stone keeps me safe." She had been abused and abandoned in unthinkable ways by those who were supposed to keep her safe. I had to affirm her feelings. She was right; her heart of stone protected her.

"But," I told her, "There is nothing left for a heart of stone but to shatter. A heart of flesh can heal." She began the slow road of healing. As I watched her transform into a generous, compassionate, thoughtful woman, she often struggled with feelings of unworthiness, even self-hatred. There were times she ran; literally running states away, to escape God's people who loved her because it was just too much to accept the kind of love she was being offered. She did not feel worthy. She remembered all the awful things she had done. She knew she had not earned this love, so she would run to people who treated her as poorly and undeserving as she felt.

The first time I read, “It’s not for your sake I will act,” in verse 32, I wanted to cross it out! I want God to act on my behalf. Yet as I walk with this high school friend, she needs these words from Ezekiel. They are words of relief. She feels ashamed and dismayed by herself and is unable to get her mind around what God has done for her. She needs to know that sometimes the blessing God is pouring onto her is not for her alone.

Yes, God has given all for you, more than you can imagine. Yes, God will restore you. Yes, God has great things for you. Yes, he has poured out grace upon grace, AND sometimes, what he does, it is not for you. It is a divine witness in the world; it is for the next person. When God's unfathomable grace is more than we can accept, verse 32 can help us create room, allowing God to transform our hurting, hard hearts. God has created space for us to receive gifts and grace that we have not earned and do not deserve before we believe ourselves worthy. He does it before we repent or change our behavior. Sometimes he pours out this grace for us; sometimes he pours it out despite us. Sometimes, like my high school friend, this is the only way we are ready to receive divine grace.

AND God invites us to reckon with our behavior. This passage tells Israel, “be ashamed and dismayed for your ways.” When we don’t run from the abundant grace of God and allow it to begin softening our hearts, we are invited to recognize our mistakes as well. I confess that my hard heart has allowed me to do unkind and selfish things, to be a part of the hurt or neglect of others. My sense of unworthiness had caused me to run from being known and loved, and also from loving and knowing.

God does not ask us to wallow in shame or self-hatred. Rather, when we recognize how our own hard-heartedness has impacted those around us, we can begin to participate in the healing and abundance of God, and our hearts will be softened, even unto ourselves.

## Respond

- The Message version says, “What a mess you made of things.” Take some time to honestly examine the messes your communities and you, personally, have been a part of. What have you done and what have you left undone? How have your communities contributed to mess and hurt? Pour out the guilt and shame onto Jesus, who is both our sacrificial lamb and our scapegoat. He will remove your sins as far as the east is from the west.
- Imagine what peace, justice, and grace can look like for yourself, your family, and your community. Confess these desires and dreams to God. What abundance is he offering you?
- How is he calling you today to soften your heart toward yourself? A friend or family member? The community? How can you participate more fully in what God is restoring this week?

## Rest

*Lord God of Justice, Love and Mercy, gather all the scattered pieces of my heart and life. Clean me from all thoughts, actions, and feelings that would close or harden my heart. Free me from idols of self-doubt, shame, comparison, pride, and control. Save me and renew a right spirit within me. May the fruit of my life be gentleness, grace, mercy, humility, justice, and your power made perfect in my weakness. Show me today how to live courageously, using all you have given me to further your Kingdom righteousness and reconciliation. Lord, soften my heart, even toward myself, so I may fully experience the renovation you are doing in me.*

## About the Author



Corenna has a lifetime passion for ministries of reconciliation and healing. She enjoys speaking and preaching for various ministries. Corenna is an Evangelical Covenant Church pastor, sent as a missionary to Young Life in Rhode Island, where she lives with her two sons, who enjoy church, martial arts, music, and outdoor activities together. [corenna.hoyt@gmail.com](mailto:corenna.hoyt@gmail.com)

# Who has the Final Word?

## A Reflection for Thursday, March 5 by Jillian Evans

Lectionary reading for 03/05/2026 [Psalm 95; Exodus 16:1-8; Colossians 1:15-23](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Colossians 1:15-23

### Read

Colossians 1:15-23 *New International Version*

#### ***The Supremacy of the Son of God***

**15** The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16** For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. **17** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. **19** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. **21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of [a] your evil behavior. **22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— **23** if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

### Reflect

In a time when our country feels like a house divided against itself, **Colossians 1:15–23** offers a grounding truth that cuts through the noise of the news cycle. We are currently surrounded by "thrones, powers, rulers, and authorities"—forces that Paul specifically mentions in verse 16. In our modern context, these are the political machines, the polarized media, and the ideologies that demand we choose a side and treat the "other" as an enemy.

The fracture in our society is deep, and the tension is high. It often feels like the very fabric of our communities is tearing at the seams. Yet, Paul presents a reality that overrules our current chaos: **"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."**

This isn't an abstract idea; it is a practical anchor. When the headlines suggest that everything is unraveling, this passage reminds us there is a power more ancient and more certain than any government or movement. Christ is the "firstborn over all creation," meaning He has the final word over the mess we find ourselves in. While we are busy trying to fix things through rhetoric or policy, Paul points us to the One who sustains our very breath and existence.

The most striking part of this passage is the move toward reconciliation. In a culture that thrives on being "alienated" and "hostile in mind," Christ's work is the exact opposite. He "made peace through his blood, shed on the cross" to bring together what was broken.

If Christ is the one holding the world together, we don't have to carry the weight of the country on my shoulders.

We can breathe. Our hope doesn't have to rise and fall with the latest poll or protest. Instead, we can stand on the firm faith mentioned in verse 23, trusting that even in a fractured nation, the King of kings is still on His throne, and He is not letting go.

## Respond

- **Release the Weight:** Identify one political anxiety that keeps you stressed.. Mentally hand it over to the Lord, repeating the phrase, "*You are before this, and You hold this together.*"
- **Curate Your Intake:** For one day, replace the time you spend reading political commentary with time spent in the Gospels. Intentionally shift your focus from the "rulers and authorities" of the earth back to the One who is "the head of the body."

## Rest

*Lord, You are the head of all things, and nothing is outside of Your reach. When our country feels like it is falling apart, thank You for holding us together. Calm my heart, steady my mind, and help me to be a person of peace in a divided world. Amen.*



### About the Author

Jillian, a graduate of North Park Seminary, is a spiritual director in Chicago. She and her husband have three amazing adult children and are enjoying this phase of life while traveling the world.

# Breaking Down Dividing Walls: Embracing Unity in Christ

## A Reflection for Friday, March 6 by Cindy Riley

Lectionary reading for 03/6/2023: [Psalm 95](#); [Exodus 16:9-21](#); [Ephesians 2:11-22](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Ephesians 2:11-22

### Read

#### **Ephesians 2:11-22**, *New Living Translation*

<sup>11</sup> Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. <sup>12</sup> In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. <sup>13</sup> But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. <sup>15</sup> He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. <sup>16</sup> Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. <sup>17</sup> He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. <sup>18</sup> Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

<sup>19</sup> So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. <sup>20</sup> Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. <sup>21</sup> We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. <sup>22</sup> Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

### Reflection

Paul begins today's passage with the imperative "Don't forget," or, put another way, remember where you used to be and who you are now. In this time of polarized thinking, we all find ourselves on one side or another of various issues. The systems of the world create points of division across lines of race, gender, sexuality, economic status, and the list goes on. This polarized thinking has created barriers within communities, families, relationships, and—yes—the church.

Paul refers to the dividing wall in the temple courts that served as a barricade to keep Gentiles from getting any closer to the Holy of Holies, where God's presence resided. The Gentiles who sought to worship God and be part of His people were relegated to the outside, looking in, because of this wall.

I wonder what dividing walls we have erected that keep those who are seeking God on the outside, looking in. Where are we, as the body of Christ, building walls between ourselves that keep others from wanting to be part of this “new” way of life Jesus ushered in? \\\\

We are often blind to these walls because we believe we have erected them in defense of the gospel or to protect the faith. But the gospel does not need defending. The gospel is Good News. And yet, I fear we have turned it into bad news through our own walls of hostility.

Take some time to ask God where you might be more committed to an issue, a conviction, or a particular way of understanding—and therefore building walls. Maybe you have a difference of opinion with someone, so you avoid eye contact for fear of where the conversation might go. Perhaps you avoid connecting with certain family members because they take the opposite side on an issue. Or maybe you avoid interacting with a certain person or group of people because you don't understand how they can be the way they are, or why they don't see Scripture and God's ways the same as you do. These are all building blocks for walls of hostility.

Jesus tore down these walls through his death, burial, and resurrection.

## Respond

This Lenten season, allow God to disrupt your comfortable spaces and reveal where you have built walls. What bricks of gender, race, class, or difference of understanding have you used?

Let go of the security these bricks provide and humbly:

- Repent of your part in building walls;
- Receive God's forgiveness;
- Risk reaching across differences and spending time with those not so like you;
- Restore unity, one step at a time, with the help of the Holy Spirit;
- Remember who you are and whose you are as we sojourn together.

And be patient and kind with yourself. These walls were not built in a day.

## Rest

*Holy Spirit,*

*I trust in your healing work that tears down the walls of hostility in our lives.*

*Please give me eyes to see what you see as barriers to the Good News,  
and fill me with courage to make a change.*

*Amen*



## About the Author

Cindy lives in Swannanoa, NC, with her husband, Dennis. Following Hurricane Helene, she launched Essence Centered Care & Leadership, offering spiritual care, staff well-being, and leadership support to organizations serving the community. She and Dennis share four daughters and six grandchildren. Cindy enjoys hiking North Carolina trails, traveling, reading, writing, crocheting, and a good cup of tea.

# Finding Rest in the Wilderness

## A Reflection for Saturday, March 7 By Sally Carlson

Lectionary reading for 03/7/2026: [Psalm 95: Exodus 16:27-35: John 4:1-6](#)

Selected passage for reflection: Exodus 16:27-35

### Read

#### **Exodus 16:27-35** *New International Version*

**27** Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. **28** Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you[a] refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? **29** Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” **30** So the people rested on the seventh day.

**31** The people of Israel called the bread manna.[b] It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. **32** Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.’”

**33** So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come.”

**34** As the Lord commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. **35** The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

### Reflect

Are you tired? I'm tired. I come to this reflection - and this Lenten season - feeling much like Bilbo Baggins in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. “I feel thin, sort of stretched... Like butter spread over too much bread.” I'm not feeling stretched because of some fantastical ring, but because of the product of my own choices - what I say 'yes' to and what I say 'no' to. I say 'yes' to too many things, and then I live with the consequences later. It is so easy to get caught up in all the activity of the day and not create space and margin for the Spirit to work in and through me. The desire to say 'yes' all the time and fill my days is really a desire for control, to be needed and important, and to do it all by myself.

We are always trying to do things ourselves. Trusting in others and God to care for us in ways that we can't care for ourselves is a challenge. How can we be sure that what we need (or what we think we need!) will be provided? It's so hard for me! Just as I have disappointed others, others have done the same to me - we're human! And certainly God has provided - just not

always in the ways that I wanted or thought that I was promised. I am in a deep season of grief over some of the things that I trusted God to provide (because I ~~needed~~ wanted them!), and I'm disappointed. Like the people of Israel, I am grumbling! In the verses preceding this passage, they complained that life had been better in Egypt. The words, 'if only...' were on their minds and hearts. Now they are wandering in the wilderness, feel abandoned, and so God provides for their needs by promising manna and quail. They were told to gather only what they needed. Those who gathered too much and those who gathered too little all received just what they needed. Any extra got all full of maggots. Gross. With this literal gift raining down from heaven, they were reminded to gather extra so that they could rest on the Sabbath. Even with these explicit instructions, they still didn't get it, and some went out on the Sabbath morning and found nothing. Verse 28 says, "The Lord says to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? *Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath...*'"

God provided the people of Israel with the Sabbath as an opposite way of life to the one they had lived in Egypt. There they lived to work - they were forced to. In Egypt, there was no rest, and their food came at the whim of the empire. In the wilderness, they had to trust God in a whole new way and adjust to a new rhythm of dependence. In this season, I am finding it hard to turn from the constant busyness and work in an attempt to feel in control - even as I sometimes feel I am stumbling around in the wilderness. In the midst of grief and doubt, I find myself saying both 'if only' about my current situation and also trying to store up the manna God is sending me rather than engaging in Sabbath rest and connection. What does it look like to gather God's provision for today and not try to control tomorrow? How do we slow down to listen to the Spirit and see God at work in the moment, even in the midst of the wilderness? Lent is an opportunity to pause in the remote wilderness and allow God's provision to rain down upon us and give us what we need - particularly when we are stretched thin.

## Respond

We grumble when we get caught up in the past (which we can't change) and the future (which we can't control). Take a moment to be still and take in where you are today - in this moment. What do you need to hear from God today? What sorts of provision do you need from Him today? Do you need rest? Fellowship? A conversation? Watch for the ways God provides for you today.

## Rest

*Gracious God, may we be able to recognize you at work in the everyday. So often we are caught up in the moment, in the grief, in the busy, and we can miss what you are doing. Open our eyes to the movement of your Spirit in our lives and in our world. Help us to find both purpose and rest in You, who gives us all that we need. Amen*

## About the Author



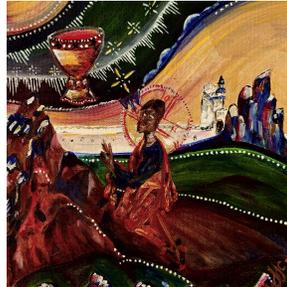
Sally Carlson serves as associate pastor at Shoreline Covenant Church in Shoreline, WA. She loves reading, the outdoors, hotdish (she's from MN!), and a good cup of coffee! Sally especially loves walking with people as they walk with Jesus. Sally lives in Shoreline, WA, with her husband, Daniel.

## *Cover art by Julie Jane Capel*

“Take This Cup From Me”

2025/2026

Acrylic on Canvas



### **About the Artist**



As an internationally selling modern impressionist painter, Julie Jane Capel explores the everyday world and human emotions by capturing the passage of time. Specifically, the ever-changing movement of beauty, justice, and faith. Art then becomes a window into her life motto: Love God. Love others. Laugh and paint the colors. Lament and change the injustices.

@JJCPAINTINGS is a collection created to be accessible – art that can easily be hung in your kitchen or living room. Art that may provoke comfort and/or conviction.

Julie has been painting since she was 14. Over these past two and a half decades, her style and subject matter have evolved with her lived experiences as a pastor, trauma chaplain, community organizer, census worker, field director for a national congressional campaign, and global traveler.

In 2009, she received her BFA, and in 2013, her MDiv (Master of Divinity) from North Park University and Theological Seminary in Chicago, IL. Since then, she has had a coast-to-coast traveling exhibit of 40 paintings on Isaiah 58. She has also been in numerous group and solo shows, selling commissioned and pre-created paintings for almost 20 years.