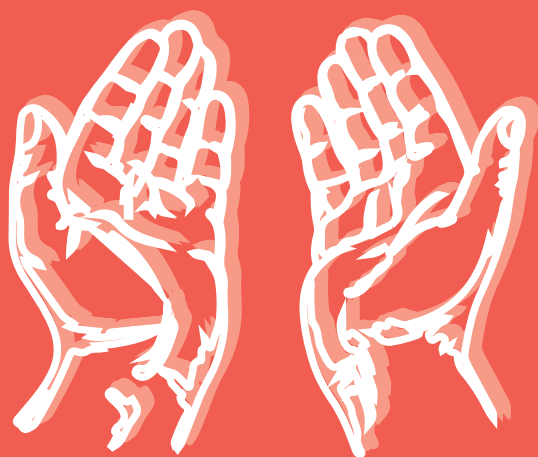
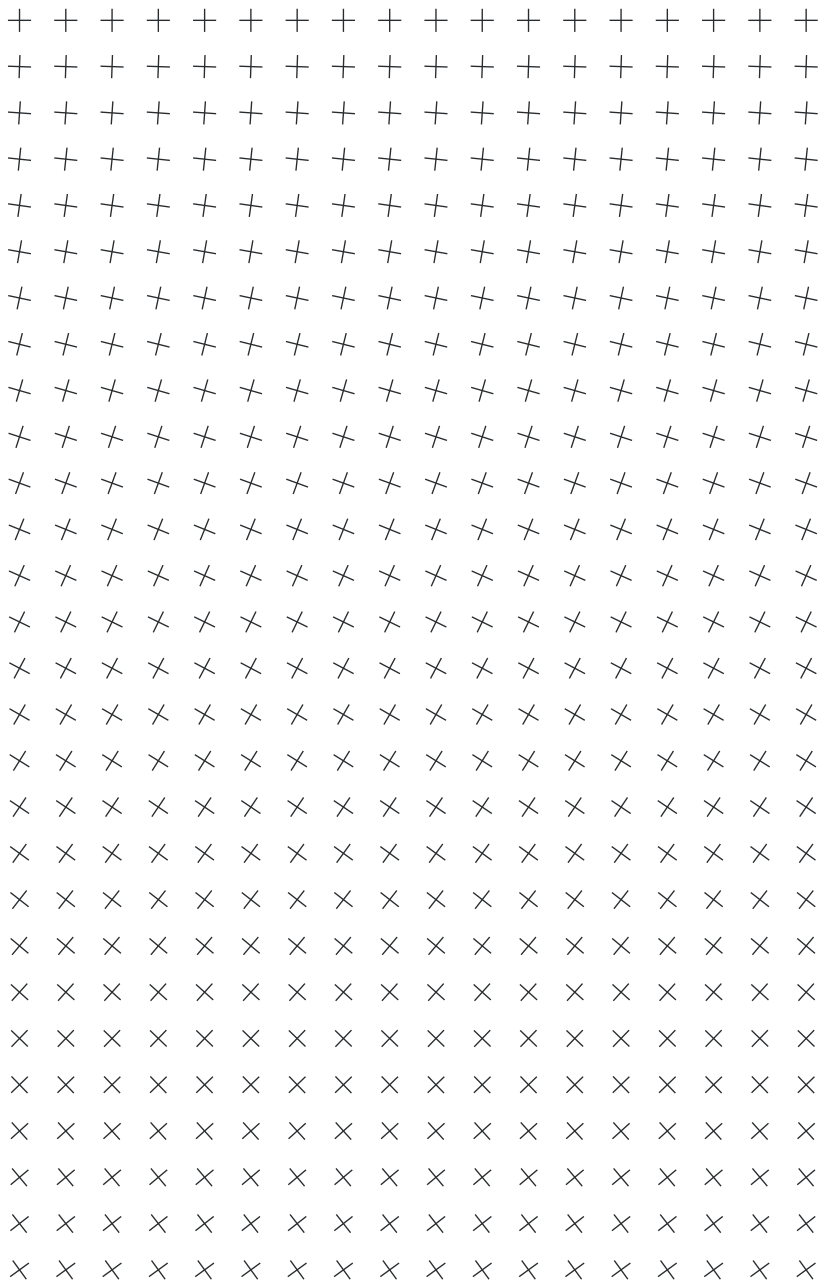


BLUEPRINT | JUNE - JULY 2019

# SEASONAL GUIDE



— FREELY RECEIVE, —  
FREELY GIVE



## INTRODUCING SEASONAL GUIDE 2

# FREELY YOU HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE

It was less than a month ago when we had almost finished the Seasonal Guide for Pentecost that we held 48 hours of prayer over Blueprint's 15th Birthday weekend. Two things became clear over this time: firstly, God is calling us to engage more actively and faithfully with his mission to transform and liberate people from poverty and injustice in our city. Secondly, God wants our Blueprint community to learn to receive from him: to accept his love, generosity, and grace.

As we prayed further after the

weekend, a verse came to mind from Matthew 10:8 where Jesus sends out the disciples - "Freely you have received, freely give."

This Seasonal Guide journey is in two halves.

It begins with "Freely you have received." Together, we want to learn to receive the audacious and unwarranted love of God. Sometimes the most radical and challenging truths to accept are our profound worthiness and 'enough-ness' to God. There is something within us that feels we need to earn or pay for His

free gift of grace. At a daily level, this shows in our lives through an unwillingness to receive the generosity of others through something as small as a cup of coffee or a curry lunch, or the simple act of allowing another to serve us.

From this deep knowing and acceptance that God loves us comes a powerful transformation: we learn to “freely give”. We learn that when God loves us nothing can ever take away our inherent value, and this leads us to the willing surrender of our reputations, hearts and bodies to the flames of injustice and tyranny in all its forms. Our service is transformed from the desire to appear noble or pay penance, and instead becomes

a life of worship. Rather than giving our lives to causes, we hand our lives back to God and he sends us as light to the dark corners of the world.

Our prayer for this season is that you will come into a fresh revelation and acceptance of how much God loves you, that the “one who did not even hold back his Son” (Rom 8:32) wants to bless you beyond what you believe you deserve or can imagine.

And yet, that the same one who has given you everything calls you to lived a life poured out to a hurting world in service and worship.



## THE DAY OF PENTECOST

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Acts 2:1-21

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When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents

of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—they hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

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## REFLECTIONS

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It hadn't been long—perhaps just over a week—since Jesus had ascended to heaven, when the howling wind shook the house where they were all were sitting. “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire,” the scripture says, “that separated and came to rest on each of them.”

The dramatic appearance of the Holy Spirit was met with confusion by some. For others, it was a promise fulfilled. Jesus had assured them, as did the scriptures long before, that a “helper would come” to bring companionship and intimacy to their relationship with the Christ. The immediate reaction to this helper dwelling among them was wild joy. So much so that people presumed they were boozed.

For the Jewish culture, the descent of the Holy Spirit showed that the God they thought was

awesome and sovereign was also playful and gentle—while still remaining powerful. Christ's example of being a God for others, with others, was being continued with the spreading of his Spirit. “How much greater is the God we have than the one we think we have,” Father Gregory Boyle, writes.

For as long as we live, Jesus has gifted us his with this Spirit to guide us in building his Kingdom. While we may not be protected from all things, the Holy Spirit sustains us through everything. More than this, He is a fountain of joy. An untameable counselor and healer, whose joy is found in dwelling within us. A gift which shows God's desire to know us intimately, and for us know him in return.



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## QUESTIONS

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- 01**      The gift of the Holy Spirit is that God lives within us. Is your idea of God a distant deity or as close as your skin? What might it look like to receive the gift of God within you?

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- 02**      Think about that quote from Fr. Gregory Boyle. How might the God you think you have need to move to make room for the generous God you do have?

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- 03**      What is God asking you to receive from Him this week?

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## JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

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John 13:1-17

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It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

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## REFLECTIONS

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Footwashing was a normal part of life in Jesus day. When you entered someone's home it was a common courtesy to have a servant (usually a slave) wash your dusty, sweaty feet. Throughout the Middle East there was a cultural disgust of feet, and the role of washing them was considered undignified. Naturally therefore, Peter is shocked at Jesus' invitation. Shame rises in Peter at the suggestion of Jesus' doing this for him.

Jesus is clear, however – this is not Jesus pretending to be less than he is. Jesus is still Teacher and Lord, but Jesus again shows Peter that he is different to other

teachers and lords. Jesus is an extravagant Lord, who pours himself out with humility. No act of generous love is beneath him.

Jesus shows how deeply his identity is established in the Father's love and opinion of him, and how this enables him to live humbly and generously, with a radically sacrificial love. He extends the love he has known in community with the Father and Spirit to his disciples. He says "Receive this from me. I want to do this for you. Receive this gift from me, and let your life be changed".

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## QUESTIONS

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- 01 Think of a time recently when someone offered to serve or show generosity to you. Did you receive it? Did you reject it? Why?

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- 02 Jesus comes as a servant. He wants to wash us, and to speak words of kindness to us that affirm our dignity and enormous value to him. What do you find challenging or comforting about this?

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- 03 What is God asking you to receive from Him this week?

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## SITTING AT JESUS' FEET

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Luke 10:38-42

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As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

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## REFLECTIONS

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In this passage, Martha understood well her responsibilities as a Middle Eastern host. She needed to ensure Jesus was refreshed from his journey, well-fed and properly entertained or else she would fail to meet her culture's expectations and let down her guest.

With sweat dripping off her brow, she sees her sister Mary, lounging around without a care in the world. Can you blame Martha for being upset? Shouldn't Jesus care about her sister ignoring her responsibilities?

To Martha's surprise, Jesus reprimands her instead. He calls her out for being too caught up in the small things to see the one thing that truly matters—

him! But Jesus' words are full of grace and love, repeating her name ("Martha, Martha") in an intimate and familiar manner. Jesus invites her into a new way of living, one based on a relationship with him.

Martha's work flowed out of a sense of obligation, caught up in her responsibilities as a good host, which served only to worry and distract her. Instead, Jesus calls her to sit at his feet, to get to know him first before she goes to serve him—a path of love and freedom, rather than anxiety and resentment. Mary understood this and, as Jesus said, she chose what is better, what will not be taken away from her.

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## QUESTIONS

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- 01      Would you describe your relationship to Christ as being firstly as a servant, or as a son/daughter? Why?

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- 02      What societal pressures or expectations might lead us to make our faith performance-based?

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- 03      What is God asking you to receive from Him this week?

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## BLIND BARTIMAEUS RECEIVES SIGHT

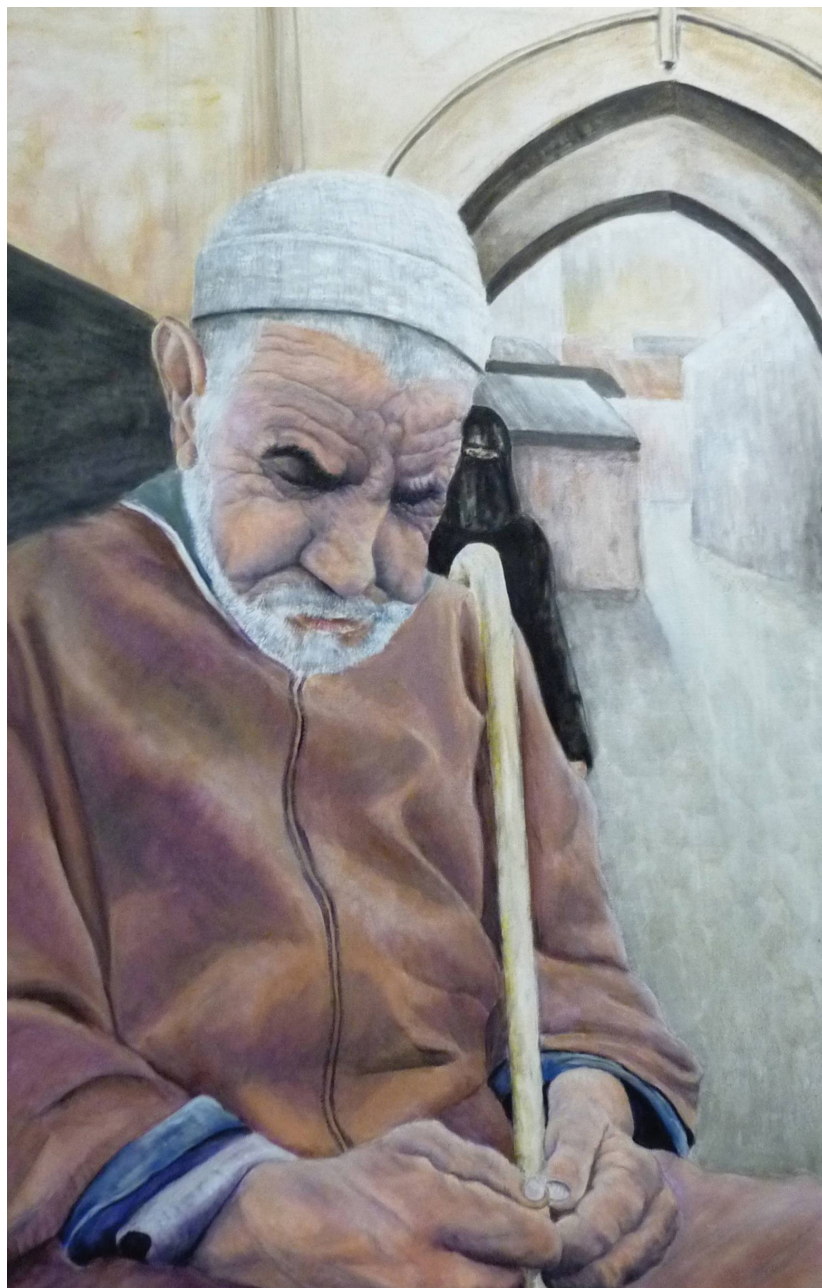
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Luke 18:35-42

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As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, I want to see,” he replied. Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.”



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## REFLECTIONS

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Other Gospel accounts tell us that the blind man at Jericho is named Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus had heard rumours of a merciful Rabbi and powerful healer from Nazareth. With a disability which had reduced him to a poor beggar, perhaps he dared to hope that Jesus would pass him by. After all, there were streams of pilgrims coming through Jericho on their way to Jerusalem for Passover. So when he is told Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, Bartimaeus is persistent.

“Son of David” is a title for the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. Calling to Jesus with the title “Son of David” Bartimaeus shows he believes the rumours he’s heard

about Jesus. Bartimaeus has faith that Jesus is one sent from God.

Though the crowds attempt to shun him, Jesus seeks Bartimaeus out. Jesus doesn’t presume what Bartimaeus needs, but he asks him. He gives him a choice. He invites Bartimaeus to share his greatest need with him. Bartimaeus humbly offers his need to Jesus and receives what Jesus has to give him.

Once blind, Bartimaeus can now see. With joy and praise to God he follows Jesus along the road. Bartimaeus is healed and reconciled to the crowd who had shunned him, and who now receive him and join in his joy.

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## QUESTIONS

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- 01** Despite Bartimaeus' insignificance in the crowd, Jesus notices him. Jesus is present to the individual even amidst the noise. Do you believe in a Jesus who reaches down to you as an individual, or is he most concerned with the crowd?

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- 02** Imagine Jesus asking you "what do you want me to do for you?" How would you respond?

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- 03** What is God asking you to receive from Him this week?

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## **FREELY YOU'VE RECEIVED; FREELY GIVE**

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Matthew 10:1-8

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Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message:



‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.



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## REFLECTIONS

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Jesus has come preaching the news that the Kingdom of God has come near. He's called the disciples to apprentice to him as he lives the new Kingdom reality, and so far it's been a wild ride. The disciples have seen people delivered from demons and cured of illnesses.

Upon hillsides and down on lake shores they've heard Jesus speak to crowds. In cities and towns they've seen houses and synagogues crammed full as people came to hear good news and see lives transformed. And now, Jesus is sending them out to do the same. He says, "first you've seen me do this, now go and do likewise".

In no way did any of them earn their place in his band of followers. Rather, the invitation into relationship with Jesus was a gift itself. They have received Jesus as both teacher and friend, and increasingly they are beginning to understand that he is also Lord. They have received a new life of purpose and meaning, full of the authority of the living God who heals and restores.

To them much had been given, and Jesus makes it plain that they weren't just to keep it all to themselves: more people needed to know. The Kingdom of Heaven had come near!

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## QUESTIONS

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- 01** Sometimes the best way to learn is by doing. Can you think of a time where you stepped out and did something which stretched your faith? What did you learn?

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- 02** Sometimes it is in giving we realise what we've received. Can you think of a time when this has been true for you?

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- 03** Where is God challenging you to give away what you have freely received?

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## LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

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1 John 4:7-21

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Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.



This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

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## REFLECTIONS

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Children are always following others: their parents, older siblings, and other adult figures. There are countless stories of toddlers running around shouting “nuclear disarmament” and “tax benefits”, much to their parents’ delight. They learn and grow through imitation. In a similar way when you spend a lot of time with someone, you can find yourself using their catchphrases or copying their mannerisms.

This passage tells us that “we love because he first loved us”. God is not only a perfect example of love, God is love, and he demonstrates to us in his being what pure, undiluted love can look like. Just like children, we have no capacity

for this kind of love without first seeing it modelled to us by God and his persistent desire to be known by us.

Likewise, a lack of this love displays a lack of knowledge of the nature of God, “for whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen”. BibleGateway suggests that God is known by the manifestation of our love for one another, because “God’s love for us has empowered us to love both other human beings and God”. As we learn to recognise God’s love for us, we are given the strength to love others.

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## QUESTIONS

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- 01      Where have you seen a hard decision to love others for Jesus create new life for you?

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- 02      For what person or people do you most need the empowering love of God to dwell in you, in order to love abundantly right now?

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- 03      Where is God challenging you to give away what you have freely received?

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## LOSE YOUR LIFE TO FIND IT

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**Matt 16:21-28**

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From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

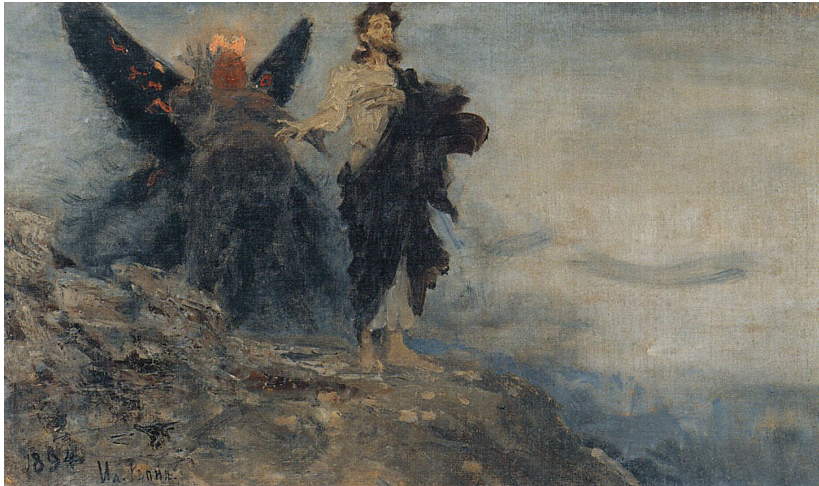
Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save

their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”



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## REFLECTIONS

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We have a complicated relationship with pain and death. Our modern society has been built around creating comfort and safety. In this passage Peter - overcome by Satan's darkness - becomes the voice of safety and security, questioning Jesus' holy call to save the world through his suffering. Jesus' response? "You're thinking only about human concerns!"

Many of us will be familiar with these 'human concerns' as expressed by well-meaning friends or family. They caution us be 'wise' or not to be reckless. Yet Jesus says God's mentality is quite different to these worries. He says that the gateway to life is through the place of pain and death. He says that if you try to

hold on to what you have you will ultimately lose everything, but if you hand away your life you will find the true meaning of living. He embodied this alternative way in his death and resurrection.

The path of human concerns is a dangerous one that leads us to build more walls around our hearts and homes to ensure safety, and to consume more and more cultural opiates to avoid pain. It creates division between us and God, us and our neighbour, and between us and our own souls. Jesus invites us in John 10:10 by saying, "I have come so that you may have life and life to the fullest", but this life is only available to those who will first lose it.

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## QUESTIONS

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**01**      What do you think your greatest human concern is at the moment?

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**02**      What would it look like practically for you to give away your life around this concern?

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**03**      Where is God challenging you to give away what you have freely received?

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## LOSE YOUR LIFE TO FIND IT

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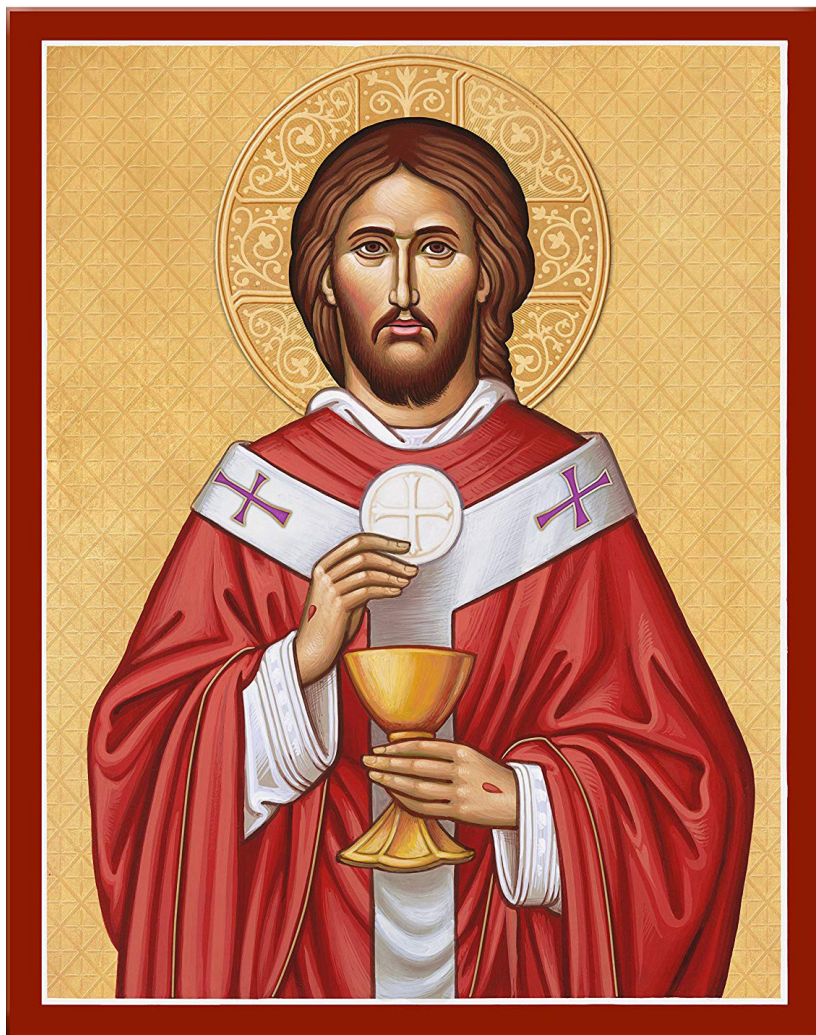
John 15:9-17

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As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might

go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.



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## REFLECTIONS

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Many times in the scriptures we are told to love one another like God loves us. Think about that... We are called to love with the love that is eternally forgiving, inexhaustibly loving, and unceasingly generous even to the point of death. If we want a blueprint or a roadmap for a fully-lived faith, Jesus says it is to embody and reflect the pattern of the Father's love for us to one another.

Last week we heard Jesus' rebuke to Peter about 'human concerns', and his invitation that we can only be his disciples if we lay down our lives. But what does this look like? Here Jesus specifies that "There is no greater love than to lay down your life down for your friends." Jesus would soon

fully embody this by dying for his friends on the cross in Jerusalem.

God's Church is to be known by its absurd and generous love. Jesus said that the world would know we are his disciples by our extreme love for one another (John 13:35). This was the testimony of the early Church who "...were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2:44-45). Can you imagine how powerful our words about Jesus would be if they were supported by these kinds of actions?

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## QUESTIONS

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- 01      Philippians 2:3 says we should “consider others more important than ourselves.” Does this excite, offend, or evoke a response in you?

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- 02      What might a place of weakness be where you need God’s help to enter into this life of outrageous love and generosity?

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- 03      Where might God be calling you to lay down your life? For what, or for whom?

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