

THE JOURNEY

AN 8 DAY DEVOTIONAL



OPENING

KING OF GLORY

Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, invincible in battle.

Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The LORD of Heaven's Armies—he is the King of glory.

PSALM 24:7-10

Read Psalm 24

This declaration paints a beautiful yet urgent picture! The King of Glory is ready to enter but so often we, and those around us, can be so unaware of it - 'sleepy' as the Message version says! This psalm is a declaration. We too are invited to declare that the King of Glory is ready to enter in. Declarations in prayer, shouts of praise and worship, speak the Kingship of Jesus over our villages, towns, cities, regions, nation and world.

In the natural and the everyday, it may not look like a triumphant entry of a King (the Jews were awaiting a Messiah who would arrive in splendour and glory). God came to earth as a meek and mild baby who gives us the greatest example of servanthood in history, yet from this posture came glory in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As we humble ourselves, as we pray and seek His face, as we repent and turn away from our error, He promises to hear from heaven, forgive us and heal our land.

**'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven....'**

MATTHEW 6:9-10

reflect

What is the Lord saying over your community? Where is He riding in, in glory?

Prayer:

Lord, we choose to lift up our heads to see You, King of Glory. You are mighty, majestic, victorious and reign in glory. We **open up** our hearts and lives to You and we welcome You to ride in, King Jesus. We ask for many eyes and ears to be **opened** to You, Jesus. We declare, 'Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. Amen.

JOURNEYING

DISRUPTED

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians").

This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.

The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

ACTS 8:26-31

Read Acts 8:26-31

Saul has just approved of the stoning of Stephen and great persecution has broken out against the church in Jerusalem. All except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Jesus has just commissioned the disciples to preach the gospel and has declared to them, 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1:8)

As the early church scattered under persecution, the gospel spread. Amidst this uncertain time, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip and sent him down a desert road. Philip would have already been confused at the **journey** he was on and what the Lord was doing as the disciples were scattered, and now He was being led to **journey** down another dead-end desert road. But as he went, he met a eunuch who, unbeknown to him, was waiting to hear the gospel. Little did Peter know that his obedience to the Lord in the trial meant he met the Ethiopian eunuch - such an influential figure - and even more incredibly, he could speak directly into the Isaiah passage that the eunuch had open! Because Philip was available to be disrupted in his **journey**, this not only impacted the

eunuch, but it led to an opening up of the gospel in Ethiopia and beyond.

In the scattering it would have been easy for Philip to feel disheartened, and the desert road would have only added fuel to that fire. Yet Philip obeyed and continued to be open to how the Lord wanted to use him. Philip, on one journey, allowed for his **journey** to be interrupted by what God was doing in another person's journey. He was surrendered to the Lord and therefore available to notice, stop, listen, offer, speak. In the busyness of the world, the temptation is to join it. Yet we are called to live counter-culturally.

reflect

How willing are you to be disrupted by the Lord in your journey? Notice. Stop. Listen.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, help us to notice the **journeys** that we are on; even if it is an unexpected path and feels like a desert road. We surrender our plans again to you. Thank you that you never leave us or forsake us and that we can stand on your word and 'know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.' (Romans 8:28). Amen.

WELCOMING FRESH BREAD

“Suppose you went to a friend’s house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, ‘A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.’ And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can’t help you.’ But I tell you this—though he won’t do it for friendship’s sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”

LUKE 11:5-10

Read Luke 11:5-10

It was customary in first-century Jewish culture that when someone visited, the host was required to provide for him or her. Hospitality was a community requirement and there would have been powerful feelings of shame for the one who didn’t want to get up to **welcome** the visitor.

The point Jesus is making in this passage is that there is always **welcome** in Him when we knock, and when we keep on knocking.

In this journey of life and faith that we are all in, we too must offer the same **welcome** that Jesus offered. He was approached by many people - the leper, the children, the centurion, the paralytic, the ones and twos, and the crowds. Whenever Jesus was approached by the marginalised, the outcasts, the broken and hurting, he responded with **welcome**, in love - with truth, healing, salvation and freedom.

We too have the **welcome** of fresh bread in our hands. As His disciples, Jesus says to us, ‘you are the light of the world’. We have something to offer a hurting world - the welcome of fresh bread, the Bread of Life.

reflect

What do you have to offer as ‘fresh bread’ in welcome to those around you today?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for Your **welcome** to us - grace and mercy. We receive that **welcome** today. Help us to welcome others like you **welcome** us. May we be so aware of the ‘fresh bread’ we have to offer to many who are hungry around us. ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled’. We long to join in with you so that many may come to know You, Bread of Life. Amen.

PARTICIPATING

GOD'S CO-WORKERS

*Then he asked them,
"But who do you say I am?"*

*Simon Peter answered,
"You are the Messiah,
the Son of the living God."*

MATTHEW 16:15-16

Read Matthew 16:13-20

Simon answers, "You are the Messiah the Son of the living God".

We are 16 chapters into Matthew. We've had the Sermon on the Mount, we've had Jesus healing many – the sick, the mute, the lame. Jesus has calmed a storm, he's put evil spirits into pigs who then jumped into the sea and drowned. The disciples have been around Jesus' questioning of religious leaders, they've seen a young girl raised to life, a woman healed of 12 years of bleeding, and not to mention a whole load of challenging but life-giving teaching, stories and parables.

Yet only at this point – only after all of this – does Jesus ask this question to his disciples, "But who do you say I am?". And it's Peter – the one who will later deny Jesus when things get dangerous – who goes out of a limb and states who Jesus really is.

Jesus answers, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being." Simon has watched Jesus do all these miracles...but at this point He's not just Simon's teacher – He is Jesus the Messiah – the Son of the Living God.

The disciples **participated** for years without knowing the depths of who Jesus truly was! They healed in His name, they did signs and wonders, they followed him, they were among the crowds, they watched, and all without knowing He was the Messiah until later. In all of this, Jesus gave opportunity to participate beyond their status, lifestyle, character, expectations or behaviour.

reflect

How ready are we to invite others into participation, even those who are unlikely?

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for your grace and mercy. Help us to create spaces for those around us to **participate**. May we lean into difference. Help us mine for gold in each other. Let us create opportunity by opening doors for others to walk through. May we notice where You're inviting us to **participate** and grant us the courage to get in step with You. For Your Kingdom and glory alone, amen.

BELONGING

MAKE SPACE

One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles. Here are their names:

*Simon (whom he named Peter),
Andrew (Peter's brother),
James,
John,
Philip,
Bartholomew,
Matthew,
Thomas,
James (son of Alphaeus),
Simon (who was called the zealot),
Judas (son of James),
Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).*

LUKE 6:12-16

Read Luke 6:12-16

With Jesus being fully God and fully man, I'm often so struck by Jesus' choice of the twelve. Especially Judas Iscariot. Jesus appointed Judas even though He knew that he would betray Him. No wonder Jesus went up a mountain and prayed to God all night before making the choice! Jesus' acceptance of Judas despite what was coming is challenging. It goes against the innate protection of ourselves and those we love.

Jesus had a small dinner with his closest friends, washed their feet and created the ultimate space of belonging despite knowing that Judas would betray him and Peter would later deny Him.

So often fear can stop us creating spaces of belonging that let others in. Fear can close us off, shut us down and put a guard up. Yet Jesus sets the greatest example of how to invest in relationships and how to create a close-knit family despite what may be ahead, and what could (and did) happen. Through prayer, Jesus submitted to the will of the Father and obeyed out of a place of prayer.

reflect

How can we overcome fear to create more spaces of belonging?

Prayer:

Help us, Father God, to see people through Your eyes and according to Your will. 'For it is [Your] will that all who see [the] Son and believe in him should have eternal life...' (John 6:40). Help us create true **belonging** and to be family to those around us. For Your glory, Amen.

CELEBRATING

DIVERSITY IS GOD'S WAY

'Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.... ...He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.'

EPHESIANS 4:2-6, 16

Read Ephesians 4:2-6, 16

Diversity is God's intention. Theodore Roosevelt once said, 'comparison is the thief of joy'. Comparison so often tries to steal creativity and the **celebration** of God's unique design by making us feel that being the same is the best option.

Genesis 1:27 tells us that 'God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them'. Every single person, every individually-designed fingerprint and unique DNA is made in God's image - yet so beautifully diverse. Together, we are one body and one Spirit but we are many parts with each part playing out its own melody in one big symphony. Where there is temptation to fit in, we are called to stand out. The bible describes us as temporary residents, foreigners, exiles, aliens, strangers... we are called to shine brightly in the darkness and to point to the Light of Jesus. This is a **celebration** of who He is.

reflect

Where are you called to stand out?

Prayer:

Thank you, Creator God, that You made us all uniquely in Your image. In a world that is getting darker, help us stand out and shine bright for You, Lord. May each of Your individual image-bearers know his and her part, instrument and voice as we come together in playing your resounding and beautiful symphony. Amen!

TRANSFORMING LIGHT

“As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me”.

ACTS 22:6-9

Read Acts 22:6-9

Jesus revealed His **transforming** power as light...both words for light that Paul uses here is same Greek word ‘phos’. Sometimes when we think of light, we can have an image of something quite safe, like switching on a lightbulb or a small candle flame. This story of Paul’s conversion definitely doesn’t depict the image of tame...

Phos can be defined as fire-light. Jesus uses the same word to tell people who He is - the Light - shining, unapproachable, firelight. This is how Jesus showed up to Saul...and even more mind-boggling this is this same word that Jesus uses to describe us...His people...His Church:

“You are the light (phós) of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden...In the same way, let your light (phós) shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:14, 16

This is the **transforming** power of Jesus. ‘We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Jesus calls His people to bring His transformative light in every sphere, in every day, in every relationship, across every boundary. Jesus is phos light, and we too are phos light to the world.

We need to change our expectation-level from the small, safe lightbulb to recognising that Jesus is the phos light who lives in each of us and is transforming us. This is who dwells in His people, and this is the **transformative** light He has put on a hill for all the world to see through His Church.

reflect

Where do you long to see God’s transforming power today?

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, that you are **transforming** us. Thank you for Your invitation to ‘be **transformed** by the renewing of our minds’. May we see many stories of **transformation** in our lifetime! ‘I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.’ (Eph 1:19-21). Amen!