THE LIVING WORD OF PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE AUGUST 21 - AUGUST 27

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Proper 16

These passages draw us to a holy fire that calls and consumes, upends and heals. Each text listens for the voice of God that speaks into ordinary time with mercy, lifting human lives into greater fullness.

Jeremiah's story begins before his birth, and it unfolds like a summons. The voice that formed him, now is sending him. And the word entrusted to Jeremiah is sharp. He is named as one who will uproot and rebuild, who will speak with God's own urgency. All of this begins in trembling. And it is this trembling, in fact, that makes room for the word to begin to take hold.

Psalm 71 offers the voice of one who has known God from the very beginning. There is no nostalgia here in this text, only the ache and clarity that come with age. The psalmist insists on praise, even as strength fades. The voice that God formed still rises to speak.

Through Isaiah, we're shown the shape of a life aligned with the presence of God. The prophet describes a turning of the heart. Yokes are lifted, bread is shared, and the world becomes illuminated again. Holiness appears where the afflicted are welcomed. The light we seek often waits in the face we've overlooked.

Psalm 103 sings of who God has always been. The words are addressed inward, soul speaking to soul. This is the slow work of remembering: a God who forgives, who heals, who crowns with steadfast love. God doesn't call His people to performance, but into participation in the life that holds us together.

Hebrews speaks of a mountain—two, in fact. One that can't be touched without terror, and one that can be approached with awe. Sinai and Zion. Thunder and welcome. The writer reminds us that we have not come to a place of dread, but to a living assembly and to Jesus Himself. And yet this too is fire—unshakable, consuming. What is being offered isn't safety, but the presence of the Living God. And notice, the trembling is still present, but is made holy.

In the Gospel passage, Jesus speaks and acts on the Sabbath and it causes controversy. A woman who has been bent and burdened for years is suddenly standing upright. Jesus has seen her, He has called her forward, and He has touched her. She praises while others protest. But the voice of mercy doesn't falter. A daughter of Abraham has been made whole and the atmosphere in the synagogue has shifted. The people rejoice. They can't explain their joy. They simply recognize a miracle has taken place in their midst.

Across these readings, we're given a vision of a God who speaks, calls, heals, shakes, and restores. This is not a God who fits into our safe categories. He is the consuming fire who lifts the lowly and topples the proud.



FOR PRAYER & REFLECTION

Where do you go when you need a refuge? Maybe you hunker down in your favorite easy chair, or visit your parents, or spend time with a trusted friend. Globally, we hear stories of brave refugees who fled war, famine, or corrupt governments to find refuge in countries where they had never been before.

One of our psalms this week reminds us that God is our refuge—a rock and a fortress. Perhaps this is a new sort of image for you. A few years ago, I visited Fort Ticonderoga in New York, on the shores of Lake Champlain. I was struck by the thickness of the walls of the fort and the way it was positioned in the land to provide the best sort of protection. What must it have been like to be a soldier, under siege, taking refuge within those thick walls? How carefully sites were chosen and built for forts like that one.

Our God is like that. Our God is a refuge, a rock, a fortress. He is a place where we can go and experience a sigh of relief when we are feeling embattled. We can be confident that God will protect us and give us a chance to catch our breath. I encourage you to read this passage in *The Message*. I love these words:

Be a guest room where I can retreat; you said your door was always open!

God's door to us is always open, especially in times where we need refuge. Perhaps you are in a season where you are battling health issues or struggling in a difficult relationship. Or maybe your battles are internal, fighting against anxieties and depression that deplete your strength each day. Or maybe your battle is just the daily struggle against the everyday troubles that we all face.

Run to God. Let Him shelter you. He is a fortress, a strong tower, a refuge in times of trouble.





SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday

Psalm 71:1-6; Jeremiah 6:1-19; Hebrews 12:3-17

Friday

Psalm 71:1-6; Jeremiah 6:20-30; Acts 17:1-9

Saturday

Psalm 71:1-6; Jeremiah 1:1-3, 11-19; Luke 6:1-5

Sunday

Psalm 71:1-6; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 103:1-8; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17

Monday

Psalm 10; Jeremiah 7:1-15; Hebrews 3:7-4:11

Tuesday

Psalm 10; Jeremiah 7:16-26; Revelation 3:7-13

Wednesday

Psalm 10; Jeremiah 7:27-34; Luke 6:6-11

Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

The Morning Liturgy

Opening Scripture

Thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Isaiah 57:15

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 51)

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim Your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of Your saving help again and sustain me with Your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen*.

Scripture Reading (read Psalm and Gospel text here)

Period of Silence

Confessing Our Faith (Apostles' Creed)

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect (Proper 16)

Grant, O merciful God, that Your Church, being gathered together in unity by Your Holy Spirit, may show forth Your power among all peoples, to the glory of Your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

A Midday Prayer

Blessed Savior, at this hour You hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to You and be saved; for Your mercies' sake. *Amen*.

An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know You as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of Your love. Amen.

A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in Your will, and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your Name.

Amen.

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let Your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let Your blessing be upon us always;

through Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen.

