

DAY 1: THE WILDERNESS ROAD

Read: Exodus 13:17-22 (The Message)

It so happened that after Pharaoh released the people, God didn't lead them by the road through the land of the Philistines, which was the shortest route, for God thought, "If the people encounter war, they'll change their minds and go back to Egypt."

So God led the people on the wilderness road, looping around to the Red Sea. The Israelites left Egypt in military formation.

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the Israelites solemnly swear to do it, saying, "God will surely hold you accountable, so make sure you bring my bones from here with you."

They moved on from Succoth and then camped at Etham at the edge of the wilderness. God went ahead of them in a Pillar of Cloud during the day to guide them on the way, and at night in a Pillar of Fire to give them light; thus they could travel both day and night. The Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night never left the people.

Meditate:

What message stands out to you in this reading? Jot down the verse or the sentence that is speaking the loudest to you and read it over several times.



BY DAY THE LORD WENT AHEAD
OF THEM IN A PILLAR OF CLOUD
TO GUIDE THEM ON THEIR WAY
AND BY NIGHT IN A PILLAR OF
FIRE TO GIVE THEM LIGHT.

-EXODUS 13:21

Reflect:

There are seasons of our lives that seem to be defined as “wilderness roads.” The shortest route from point A to point B sure looked easier and faster, but here we are, years down the road, still wandering about in the same desert.

After all that wandering, the landscape may not have changed, but we have. God has been here—through every wandering, over every mountain, in every valley. God has been with us—in moments of mystery and in moments of clarity, in darkness and in light. He’s never left.

He continues to lead.

Purpose and design exist on the wilderness road.

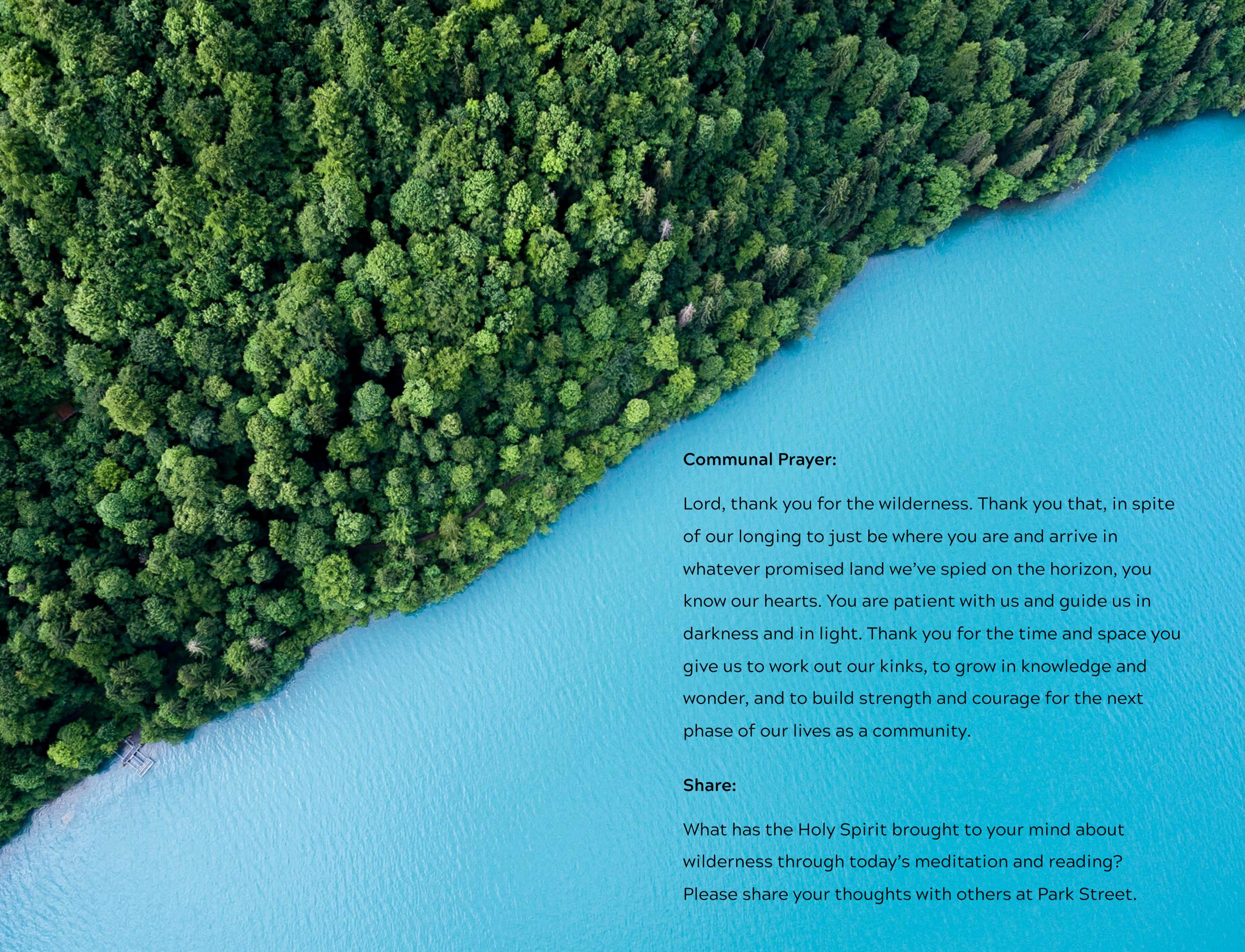
Question:

Think about a season in your life that felt like a wilderness. What purpose do you see, now, in that wandering?

How would things have been different for you if you had been given direct access from Point A to Point B without that wandering?

What might have happened to the Israelites without their season of wilderness?

What might have happened to our church without our season of wilderness?



Communal Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the wilderness. Thank you that, in spite of our longing to just be where you are and arrive in whatever promised land we've spied on the horizon, you know our hearts. You are patient with us and guide us in darkness and in light. Thank you for the time and space you give us to work out our kinks, to grow in knowledge and wonder, and to build strength and courage for the next phase of our lives as a community.

Share:

What has the Holy Spirit brought to your mind about wilderness through today's meditation and reading? Please share your thoughts with others at Park Street.

A person wearing a yellow beanie, an orange jacket, and a grey quilted backpack is walking away on a gravel path through a forest. The path is lined with trees and fallen leaves. The text "DAY 2: STRIDING AHEAD" is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

DAY 2: STRIDING AHEAD

Read: Deuteronomy 31:6-8 (The Message)

“Be strong. Take courage. Don’t be intimidated. Don’t give them a second thought because God, your God, is striding ahead of you. He’s right there with you. He won’t let you down; he won’t leave you.”

Then Moses summoned Joshua. He said to him with all Israel watching, “Be strong. Take courage. You will enter the land with this people, this land that God promised their ancestors that he’d give them. You will make them the proud possessors of it. God is striding ahead of you. He’s right there with you. He won’t let you down; he won’t leave you. Don’t be intimidated. Don’t worry.”

Meditate:

What message stands out to you in this reading? Jot down the verse or the sentence that is speaking the loudest to you and read it over several times.

Reflect:

Picture yourself in a crowd of people. It's a massive crowd, maybe exiting a concert or sporting event. Everyone's packed in tight and bustling, trying to get to their cars as soon as possible, but there are so many people that you're only inching forward, moving like one giant centipede toward the exit.

And then God steps in. He turns his head to you and says, "Take my hand. This crowd of people is nuts. I'll make a way through." He's striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. There are still so many people, but suddenly the way is clearer. God is holding your hand and making a path through the crowd. What is it like to have God striding ahead of you?

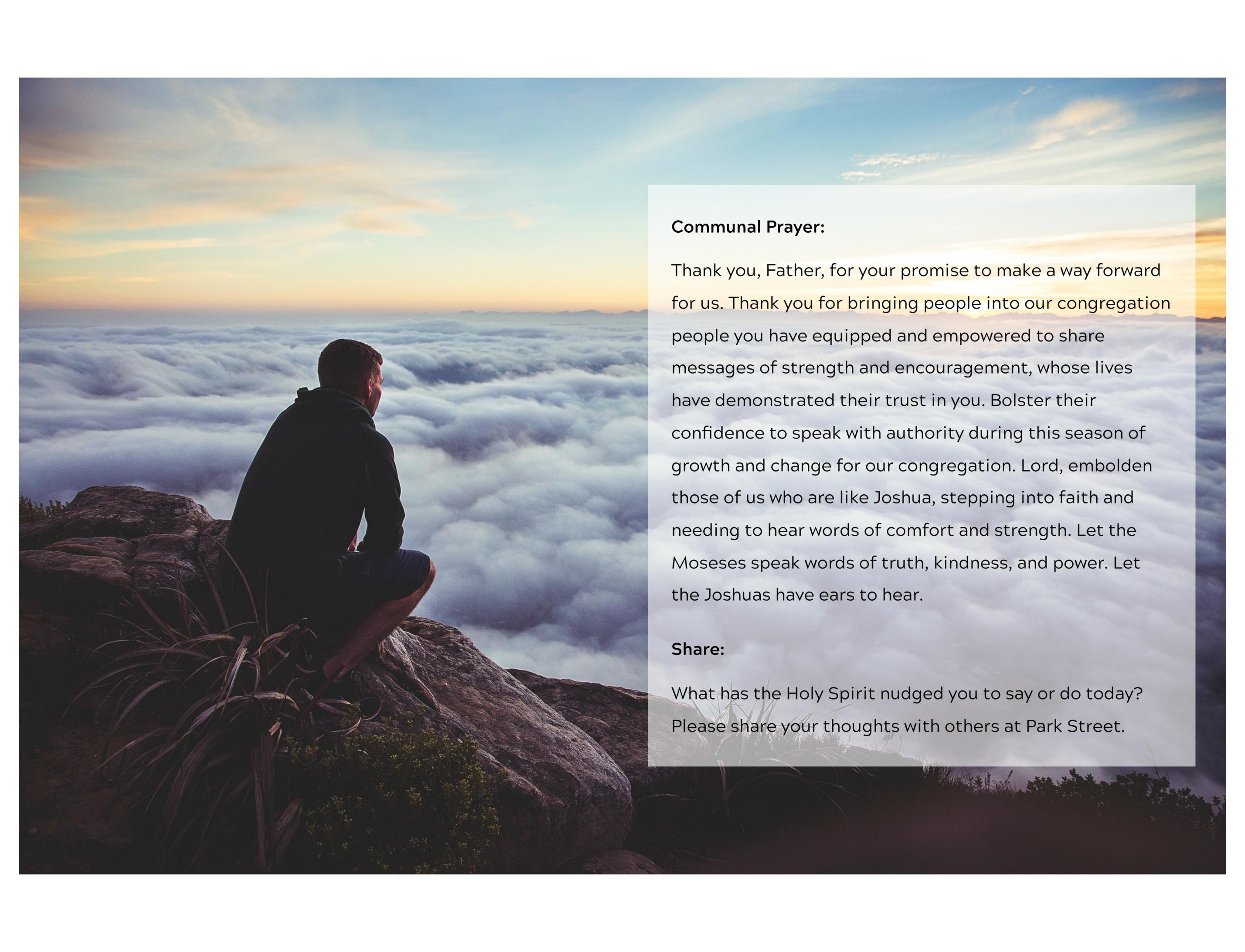
Question:

The pep talk Moses gives Joshua is like a father to a son. How do you think it made Joshua feel?

Has someone ever spoken a word of encouragement over you, like the one Moses gave to Joshua?

Do you relate more to Moses, the encourager in this passage, or to Joshua, the one needing the pep talk?



A person is sitting on a rocky cliff, looking out over a vast sea of clouds. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The person is wearing a dark jacket and shorts. The clouds are thick and white, filling the valley below. The person is sitting on a large, dark rock. There are some plants in the foreground, including a large, spiky plant. The overall scene is peaceful and contemplative.

Communal Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for your promise to make a way forward for us. Thank you for bringing people into our congregation people you have equipped and empowered to share messages of strength and encouragement, whose lives have demonstrated their trust in you. Bolster their confidence to speak with authority during this season of growth and change for our congregation. Lord, embolden those of us who are like Joshua, stepping into faith and needing to hear words of comfort and strength. Let the Moseses speak words of truth, kindness, and power. Let the Joshuas have ears to hear.

Share:

What has the Holy Spirit nudged you to say or do today?
Please share your thoughts with others at Park Street.

DAY 3: STRENGTH! COURAGE!



Read: Joshua 1:1-9 (The Message)

After the death of Moses the servant of God, God spoke to Joshua, Moses' assistant:

“Moses my servant is dead. Get going. Cross this Jordan River, you and all the people. Cross to the country I'm giving to the People of Israel. I'm giving you every square inch of the land you set your foot on—just as I promised Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon east to the Great River, the Euphrates River—all the Hittite country—and then west to the Great Sea. It's all yours. All your life, no one will be able to hold out against you. In the same way I was with Moses, I'll be with you. I won't give up on you; I won't leave you. Strength! Courage! You are going to lead this people to inherit the land that I promised to give their ancestors. Give it everything you have, heart and soul. Make sure you carry out The Revelation that Moses commanded you, every bit of it. Don't get off track, either left or right, so as to make sure you get to where you're going. And don't for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you'll get where you're going; then you'll succeed. Haven't I commanded you? Strength! Courage! Don't be timid; don't get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take.”



Meditate:

What message stands out to you in this reading? Jot down the verse or the sentence that is speaking the loudest to you and read it over several times.

Reflect:

Unlike yesterday's passage where it is Moses encouraging Joshua to be strong and take courage, here God speaks directly to Joshua. He doesn't just encourage Joshua, he commands Joshua to be strong and courageous.

It is a big moment of faith, stepping onto the precipice of what you feel you've been led to and taking that leap. The Lord knows what we are hoping to accomplish, by faith, through this next season of growth. We've been through the wilderness. We've heard encouragement from the Moses figures in our congregation and in our community. Our prayer, today, is to hear the same rallying cry of the God of the Angel Armies (Eugene Peterson's phrase):
Strength! Courage! Strength! Courage! Strength! Courage!

Question:

What promises does God make to Joshua in the passage above? Jot down what you find.

Joshua is headed into battle. What are God's instructions for Joshua to prepare for that battle?

While Moses's conversation with Joshua felt like father to son, God's words to Joshua in The Message translation feel more like a coach to his team before the last game of the season. How does God's message to Joshua speak to our community?

HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU? BE
STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT
BE AFRAID; DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED,
FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE
WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.

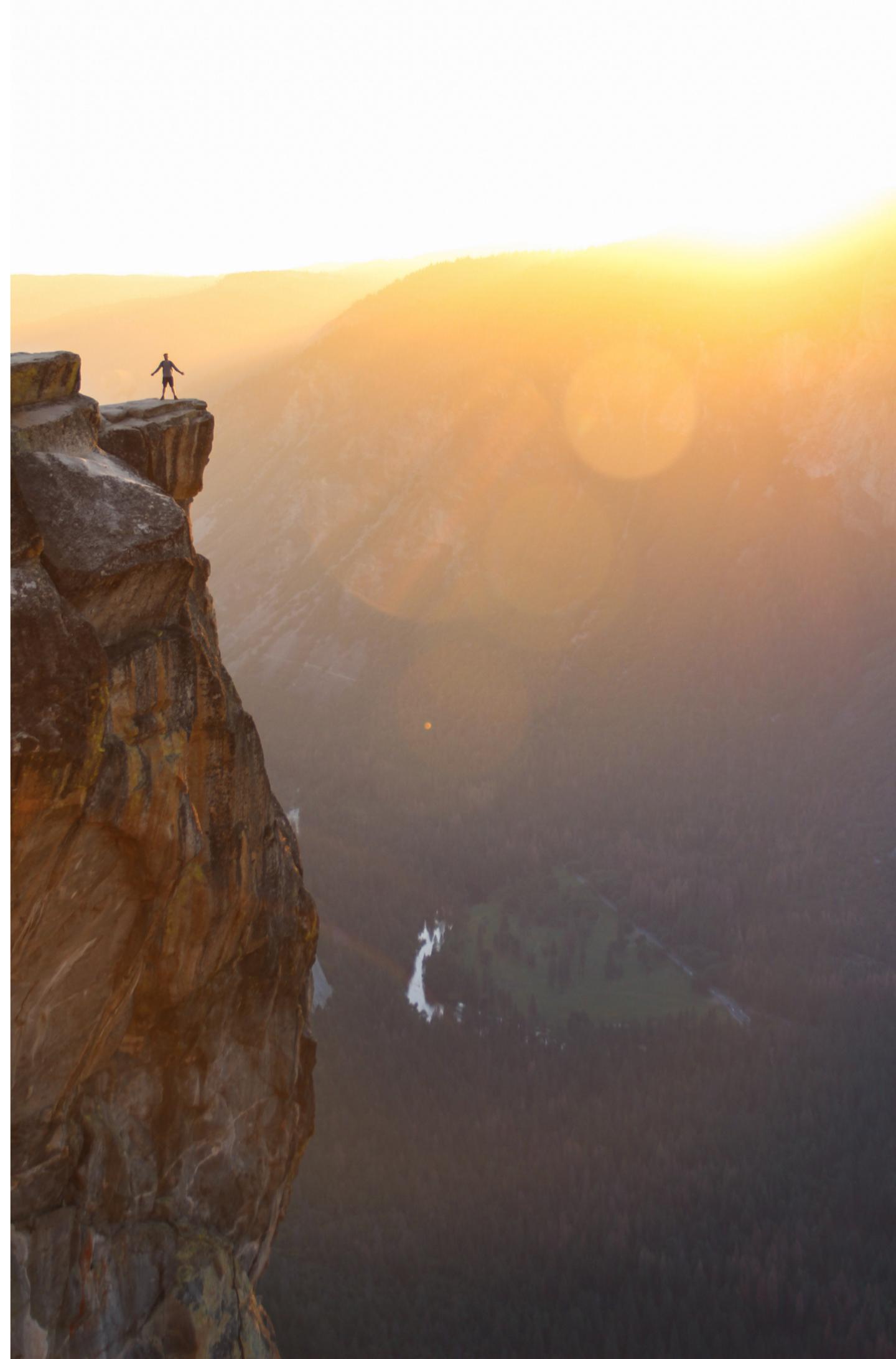
-JOSHUA 1:9

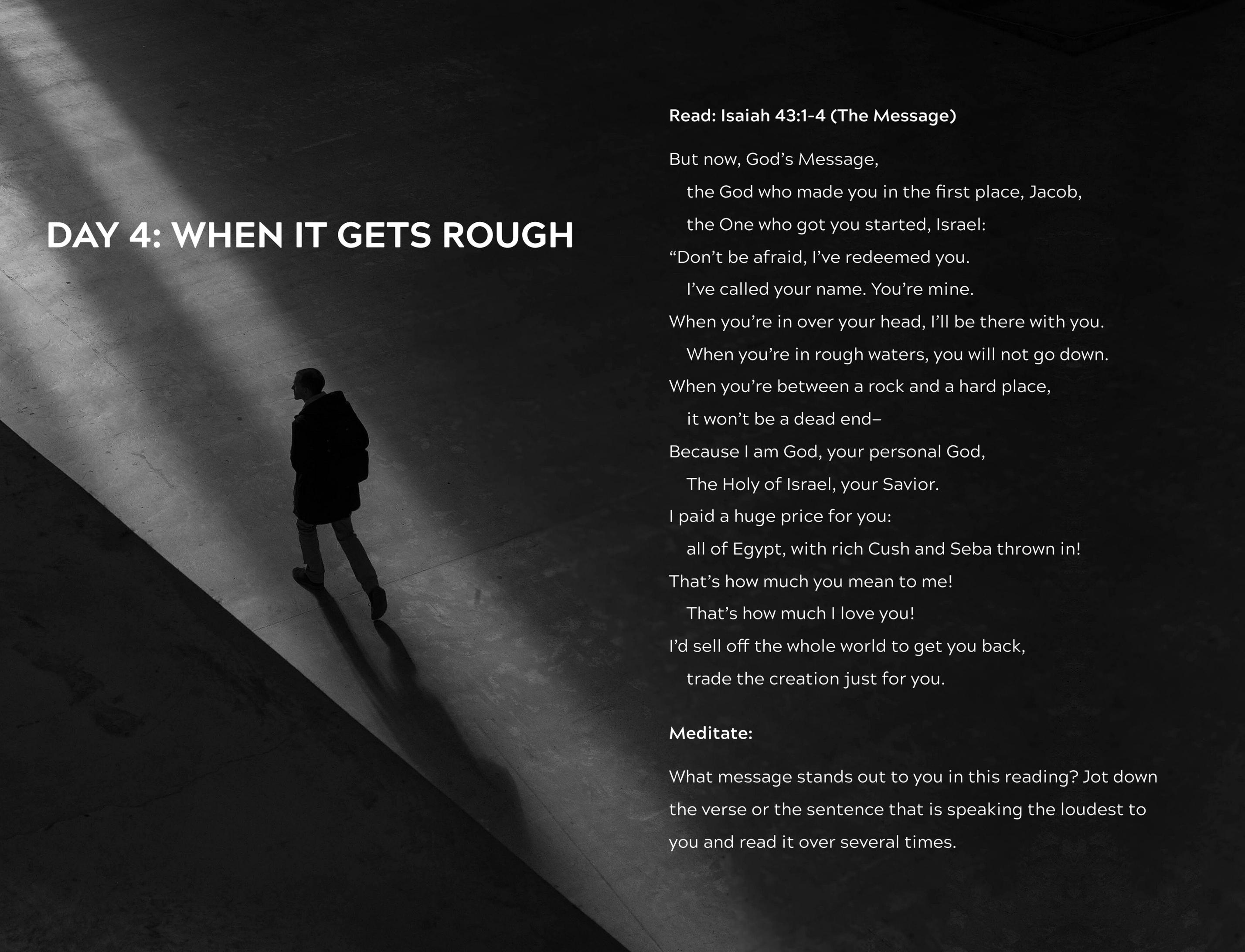
Communal Prayer:

Father, you promised Joshua that you would be with him wherever he went, and you urged him to give it everything he had, keeping the Word of God close, reading it daily, aiming to never depart from its path. You promised Joshua that if he did not sway from pursuing your Word, he would get where he is going. Let us be a people of one mind and heart. Let us be a people who give the pursuit of your Kingdom everything we have. Let us be a congregation that keeps the Word of God close. Let us be a people who do not sway from pursuing your Word. Lord, embolden us with the same rallying cry you gave to Joshua - *Strength! Courage!* Thank you for being with us in every step we take.

Share:

What has the Holy Spirit drawn to your mind as you read and prayed through today's passages? Please share your thoughts with others at Park Street as we continue our week of discernment.





DAY 4: WHEN IT GETS ROUGH

Read: Isaiah 43:1-4 (The Message)

But now, God's Message,

the God who made you in the first place, Jacob,
the One who got you started, Israel:

"Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you.

I've called your name. You're mine.

When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you.

When you're in rough waters, you will not go down.

When you're between a rock and a hard place,

it won't be a dead end—

Because I am God, your personal God,

The Holy of Israel, your Savior.

I paid a huge price for you:

all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in!

That's how much you mean to me!

That's how much I love you!

I'd sell off the whole world to get you back,

trade the creation just for you.

Meditate:

What message stands out to you in this reading? Jot down the verse or the sentence that is speaking the loudest to you and read it over several times.

Reflect:

In these verses, God reminds the nation of Israel of their history, how he saved them, and how he remains with them. No matter the price, God promises to rescue the Israelites.

He doesn't say "*if* you're in over your head." He doesn't say, "*if* you're in rough waters." He doesn't say, "*if* you're between a rock and a hard place." He says *when*. As we enter this new phase of growth for our congregation, we can almost certainly count on rough waters. We will encounter challenges. We will struggle. God does not promise to make the way easy. He promises to be with us through the difficulties.

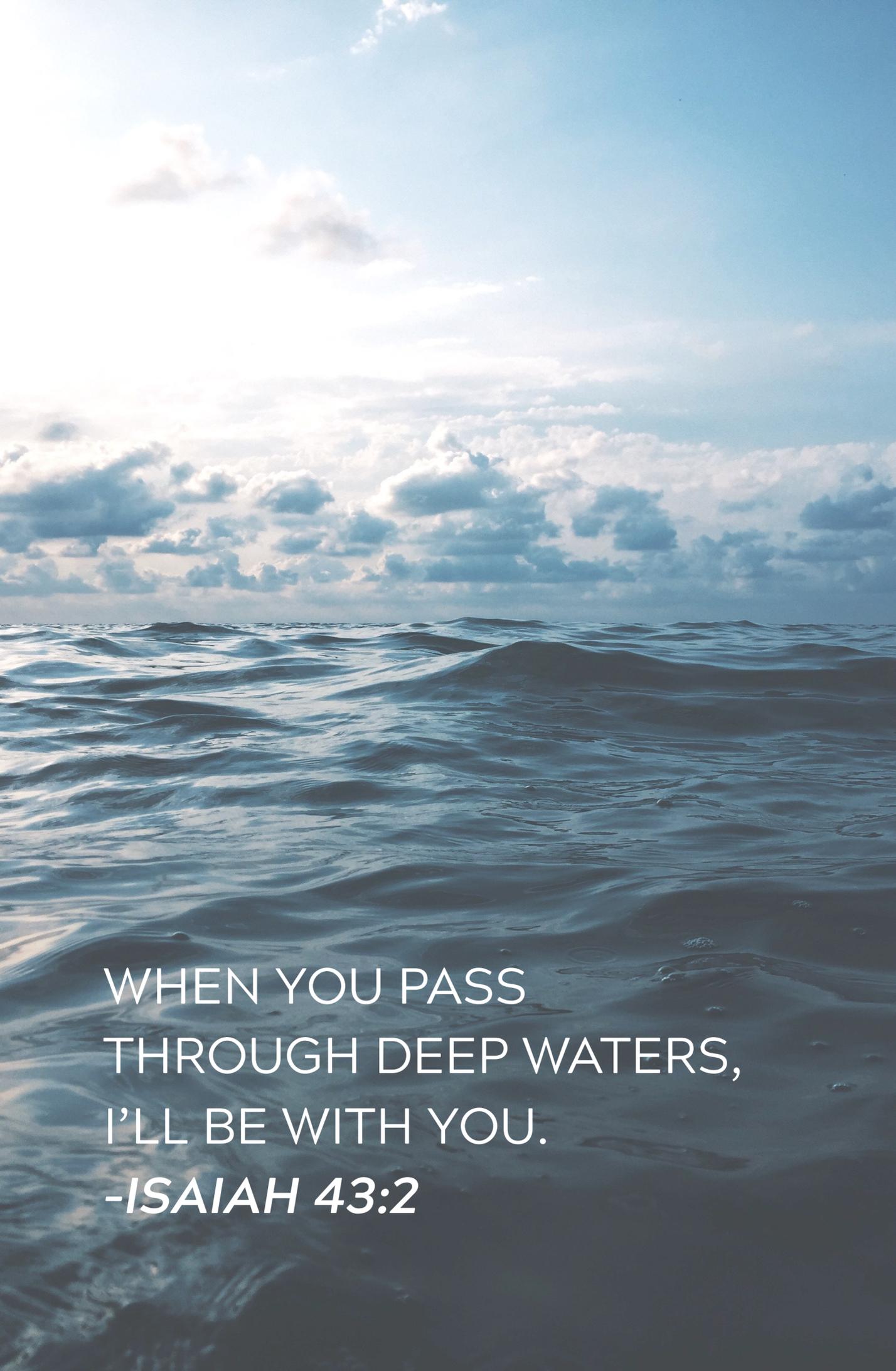
Question:

Have you felt God's presence during difficult seasons of your life? When?

If you've been a part of Park Street for a while, can you recount seasons of hardship?

How did God work through those challenges?





WHEN YOU PASS
THROUGH DEEP WATERS,
I'LL BE WITH YOU.
-ISAIAH 43:2

Communal Prayer:

Lord, you promised the Israelites to be with them when they're in over their heads. We pray that your presence does not depart from us as we enter a season filled with possibility and hope but also challenges and struggles. We're going to feel like we're in over our heads. Thank you for your promise to be with us. Remind us of your presence in small and large ways. Holy Spirit, when the floodwaters of building details and budgets and timelines threaten to drown us in noise, tune our ears to hear your still, small voice, guiding us through, promising to be with us.

Share:

What has the Lord spoken to you today? Please share your thoughts with others at Park Street as we continue our week of discernment.



DAY 5: WEEPING & REJOICING

Read: Ezra 3:11-13 (NIV)

With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord:

“He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.”

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

Meditate:

What message stands out to you in this reading? Jot down the verse or the sentence that is speaking the loudest to you and read it over several times.

Reflect:

Our lives consist of seasons. We build our fortresses only to yield ground to the next generation. Our physical spaces serve as tangible reminders of the chapters that have already been written in the stories of our lives. When it comes to this church building, if your rejoicing is pierced by weeping, take heart. What preceded this chapter matters. The Lord makes room for our grief weaved into our rejoicing. It's the beauty of bittersweetness.

Whether the Israelites were singing or wailing, digging the foundation or remembering the former temple that rose above the fresh dirt, the words of the song were the same: "He is good; his love toward us endures forever."

Question:

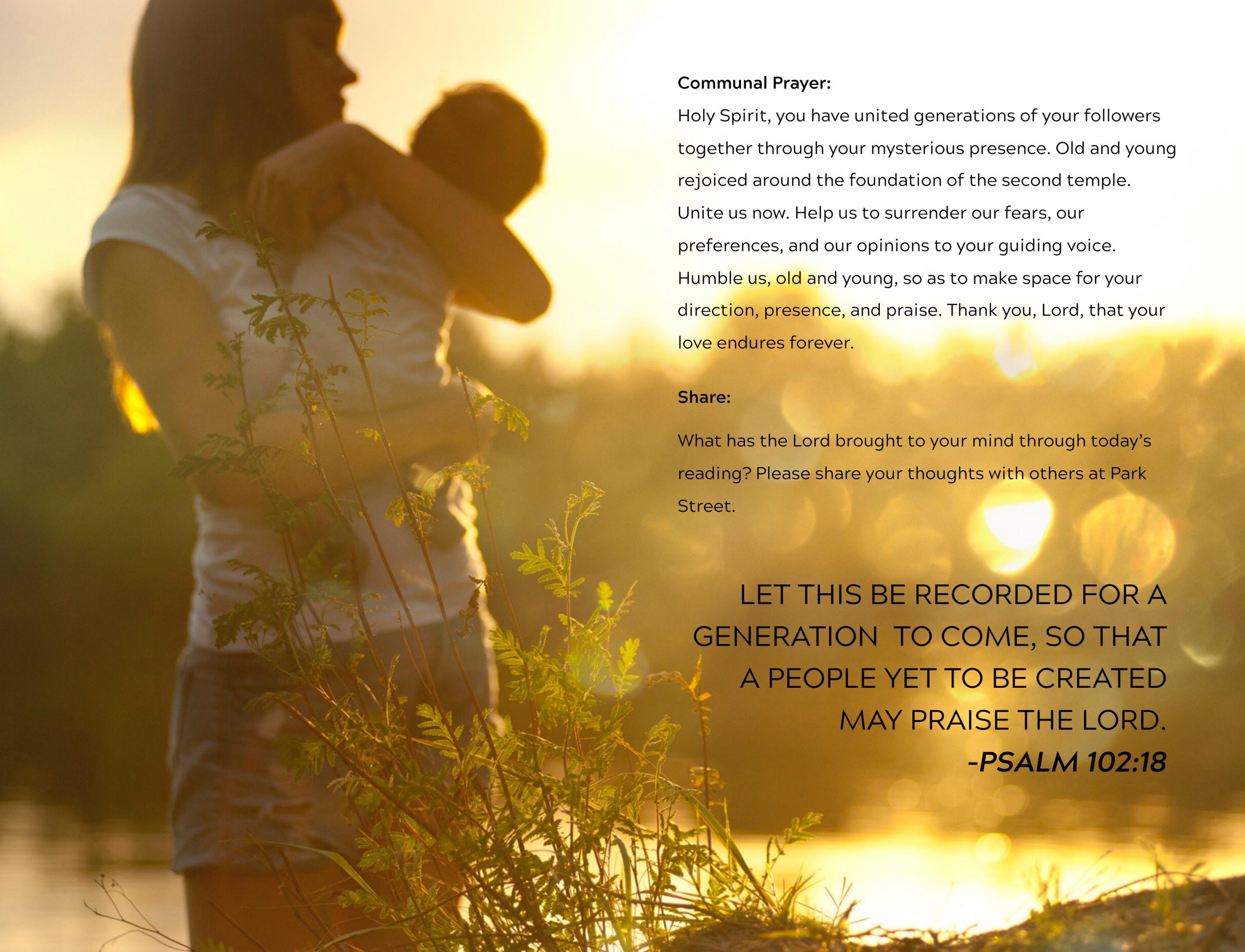
What are your feelings about the next chapter of our church's life?

Do you find yourself relating more to the younger generation of Israelites or to the older?

Recognizing your feelings, what would it look like for you to join your voice with the rest of the congregation to sing together during this season, "He is good; his love toward us endures forever"?



HOW CAN WE PRESERVE THE
MEMORIES OF THIS LAST
CHAPTER AS TOUCHSTONES IN
OUR COMMUNITY'S STORY?

A woman in a white tank top is holding a young child in her arms. They are standing outdoors at sunset, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The woman is looking towards the right, and the child is looking towards the camera. In the foreground, there are some green plants and grasses. The background is a bright, hazy sky with the sun's rays visible.

Communal Prayer:

Holy Spirit, you have united generations of your followers together through your mysterious presence. Old and young rejoiced around the foundation of the second temple. Unite us now. Help us to surrender our fears, our preferences, and our opinions to your guiding voice. Humble us, old and young, so as to make space for your direction, presence, and praise. Thank you, Lord, that your love endures forever.

Share:

What has the Lord brought to your mind through today's reading? Please share your thoughts with others at Park Street.

LET THIS BE RECORDED FOR A
GENERATION TO COME, SO THAT
A PEOPLE YET TO BE CREATED
MAY PRAISE THE LORD.

-PSALM 102:18

A person stands on a dirt road at sunset, looking up at a starry night sky. The sky is filled with stars and the Milky Way, transitioning from a warm orange glow at the horizon to a deep blue and black at the top. The person is silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun.

DAY 6: WHAT CAN SEPARATE US?

Read: Romans 8:31-39 (The Message)

So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us –who was raised to life for us!–is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.

We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

**Meditate:**

What message stands out to you in this reading? Jot down the verse or the sentence that is speaking the loudest to you and read it over several times.

Reflect:

Earlier this week we read in Isaiah about God's unfailing presence when we're in rough waters, Paul expands upon that truth in today's reading. The Lord's love for us is profound. No matter what we encounter in the coming season, there's absolutely nothing that can drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us. Inevitable complications, challenges, disagreements, setbacks, and delays exist along the path. Yet, we have discerned that God is calling us to take the journey because nothing—absolutely nothing—can get between us and God's love. That bedrock is strong. That love is unshakeable. If we keep the love of Christ at the center of our community, all of the potential chaos that threatens our ability to stand together will be silenced by the presence of our Lord.

How amazing is Christ's love for us?

Question:

Against what fears, doubts, or anxieties do you struggle?

How do these verses address those concerns?

How can you live into the truth that absolutely nothing can get between you and God's love in your day-to-day life?

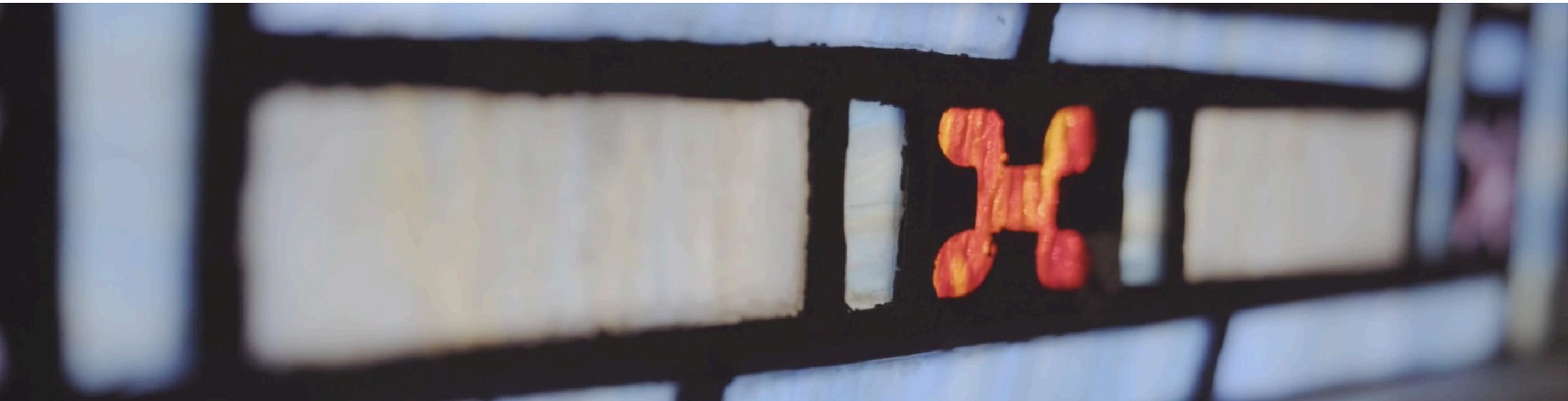
What would it look like for our community to live into these truths during this next season?

Share:

What has the Lord brought to your mind through today's reading? Please share your thoughts with others.

Communal Prayer:

Generous and almighty Father, you've poured out on our congregation your great love. You've given the leadership a vision. Your Spirit unites us. Unseen trials await just over the horizon; yet you promise to be with us through it all. When the trials come, help us to retrain our eyes and remember that none of these things can separate us from the love of Christ. Lord, root out any slander or gossip, bitterness or spite, and anything else that threatens to separate us from one another. Give us strength and courage to communicate with one another, build each other up, and bless instead of curse, so that no matter what path you guide us down, we will be united in your great love.



DAY 7: I'LL BE WITH YOU

Read: Matthew 28:18-20 (The Message)

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.”

Meditate:

What message stands out to you in this reading?
Jot down the verse or the sentence that is speaking the loudest to you and read it over several times.



Reflect:

The mission Jesus presented to his disciples is clear:

Train everyone you meet in the ways of Jesus - who sought after the lamb, embraced the prodigal son, defended and encouraged the adulterous woman, stood up for righteousness and mercy, loved those cast aside, healed the broken, called out hypocrisy, and challenged his apostles to live a life of fullness and truth beyond their dreams or imaginations.

The only reason they were able to do these things was because of the promise at the end of today's verses. *I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.* The only way we're able to step boldly forward into the next season in our church is by trusting in this same promise.

Question:

In what ways do you feel our community has been specially gifted to serve and to train in our community?

How do you see these gifts being used today?

How does this next chapter in our church community affect our ability to serve and to train others about this way of life?





Communal Prayer:

Lord, you are always with us through your Holy Spirit. Thank you. We're so grateful for the gifts you've brought to this community. Help us to know how to use those gifts well. Help us to lean into the direction you've called us and walk boldly in this way of life. And remind us daily of your presence.

Share:

What has the Lord brought to your mind during today's reading? Do you have any final thoughts you want to share from this week's communal prayer? Please share them with the community at Park Street.

FEAR NOT, FOR
I'LL BE WITH YOU;
BE NOT DISMAYED,
FOR I AM YOUR GOD.
I WILL STRENGTHEN YOU.
YES, I WILL HELP YOU.
I'LL UPHOLD YOU WITH MY
RIGHTEOUS RIGHT HAND.

-ISAIAH 41:10