

12 Stations (Meditations) of the Paschal Way of the Light of Christ

by

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12 Meditations for the Easter season from Resurrection Day to
Day of Ascension to Day of Pentecost

Introduction: ¹The following writing introduces a resource that Life Groups might want to use during this season from the Resurrection (Easter) to Pentecost. Pastor Mel mentioned that it could be used in your life groups as a meditation and prayer resource during this important season in the Church year. As we have entered the sermon series on prayer, highlighting the Lord's Prayer, researching & practicing how the Lord taught his disciples to pray - this devotional of 12 short meditations, given twice per week, will highlight the stories and miracles that occurred during Jesus' 40 days on earth as the resurrected Christ. It also highlights the watching & praying by the disciples for the advent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Whether you are meeting now or in Spring 2 or not, as Pastor Mel suggested, consider making these meditations available for your life group.

In Christian tradition, focusing on certain seasons facilitates our not forgetting the importance and significance of particular stories and how they can help teach us about areas in our own lives that might be neglected or might need repair. Meditating on those Bible stories for a season combines both contemporary psychology and the ancient Christian spiritual practice of focusing on given Scriptures and stories for a significant series of days. For psychologists of memory retention to develop behaviors into beneficial habits – 30 days of regular daily practice of it is required. For ancient Christian practices, we follow “God’s number” of 40 days for developing a practice into beneficial habit(s) or developing a spiritual practice to provide the fruit of new insights, growth of more mature character, and ways of being drawn into a deeper Christian life of prayer, spiritual discernment, and discovering the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

In Jesus’ Life, the Light had come into the world (John 1:4,9). Jesus’ resurrected Life brought eternal life for all who walk in the light as Christ is in the Light, since God is Light and has no darkness (I John 1:2-7). Christ gave a new commandment as one of His last official acts with the disciples before Jesus’ arrest, passion, and crucifixion: He said to love one another, as I have loved you (John 13:34-35). We show that we abide in the Light that Christ has brought into the world when we love one another (I John 2:8-10; 3:11). All of the teachings of the gospels about Jesus life and teachings are just so much rhetoric of another righteous Rabbi, UNLESS the Resurrection of Jesus is true. The proof that the Light had come into the world through Jesus the Messiah, the Anointed One, is that his tomb was empty. The Light had come; the Light had gone out (crucified); and the Light of Life broke out of the tomb. The angels reminded the women who came to the empty tomb that He said he would suffer many things and die but would rise on the third day (Luke 24:1-8).

This devotional series is to engage us in a practice of deepening our understanding of the meaning of Christ’s Resurrection and his subsequent 40 days with his disciples off and on until his Ascension on the 40th day after his Resurrection. The 12 “stations” or Meditations follow a pattern similar to the stations of the Cross during the traditional 40 days of Lent. It also includes the promised coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Each Meditation covers a different experience of a disciple or disciples as they encountered the risen Lord. This devotional series is called the *Via Lucis*, or the *Paschal Way of the Light (of Christ)*, which means the Passover Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, who shed his blood on the cross for the redemption from all sin for all eternity for all people who willingly receive Christ’s forgiveness – is

¹ Edited by Rev. Lavon Gentry

that Light of the world that broke out of the tomb. Please read and ponder the Scriptures and Meditations between now and Pentecost Sunday, about two per week, 3 to 4 days apart from one another. Engage your hearts with Scripture and the amazing stories given by the disciples in their encounters with our Risen Lord. Prayerfully ponder each meditation and answer the questions, whether verbally, in writing, or in journaling your responses – mental, emotional, and spiritual. Share with a partner or another.

12 Meditations of the Paschal Way of the Light of Christ

- I. First Meditation (Station I): *Jesus Rises from the Dead*: [Read Mark 16:1-8; John 20:1-18]
 - The Gospel of Luke states plainly that God is “God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive” (Luke 20:38). The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the bedrock for our hope for eternal life that Christians enjoy. If only for this life we have hoped in Christ, then we are the most pitiable of all people Paul writes (I Corinthians 15:19). [See I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:12-20]. The resurrection of the dead had already been presaged when the bones of a dead man were thrown into the grave of Elisha. As soon as his body touched Elisha’s bones, he sprang to life and stood on his feet (2 Kings 13:21). The prophetic sign that Jesus would rise again was given when He died on the cross, and the earth quaked, splitting rocks and opening graves. Many bodies of the saints then rose from their graves after His resurrection (Matthew 27:50-53). Christ’s Resurrection is the fulfillment of those prophetic signs of a resurrection possible for all. His resurrection has the potential for making the whole earth rejoice when the promise and hope of eternal life registers in the minds and hearts of believers – rejoice with an unspeakable joy because the Resurrection is proof that sin and death are conquered by Christ, and eternal life is ours, available to everyone who believes and receives! Jesus has brought us from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light, from death to life, from oppression to an eternal kingdom, and made us a chosen people and a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9). Christ is our Passover Lamb who was slain; his blood atones for us, and his Resurrection seals our hope and assurance of eternal life. When Jesus rose from the dead, he raised humankind from its tomb! Christ is Risen from the grave. He is Risen indeed. Alleluia!²
 - A. Write down or discuss your thoughts and feelings about this meditation description on Jesus’ Resurrection from the tomb. How was it enhanced when you read about the man who rose from the dead when his lifeless body touched Elisha’s bones? What ideas and feelings did you experience as you pondered the resurrection of many of the saints at the same time that Jesus rose from the dead?! What thoughts and feelings arose for you as you read the Scriptures above, and as you thought about the meaning of the Resurrection for you, for those you love, for the rest of humanity?

² Bishop Melito of Sardis, “Homily on the Paschal Mystery,” in Maxwell E. Johnson, Ed., *Benedictine Daily Prayer: A Short Breviary*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 185-86; Father Romanus Cessario, O.P., “*Via Lucis*: The Paschal Way of the Light,” in *Magnificat*, Rev. Sebastian White, O.P., Ed., (New York: www.magnificat.com, April, 2021), 33-34.

- B. Write, journal, or talk with a partner or another with whom you can share – one main point that really made a difference for you in this meditation. Use that point as a reference point for reflection, prayer, and encouragement throughout the next few days.
- C. Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me the grace to rejoice always in the Resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

II. Second Meditation (Station II): *Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene*: [Read II Kings 4:20-27; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:11-18]

- Why did Jesus appear to Mary Magdalene before he appeared to the 11 apostles? That question has been pondered for almost 2,000 years. Was Mary of Magdala more in tune with the Spirit of Christ? Was she the first to remember the prophecy that Jesus had given his disciples that He would rise on the third day (Matthew 20:19)? Or was it that Mary recognized Jesus as her Teacher, her Rabbi, only when He called her by name, “Mary,” a startling occurrence from one whom Mary thought was the gardener, a stranger to her (John 20:17). The calling of one’s name by the Lord is significant: God has not only created, formed, and redeemed you, but he has also **called** you by **name**, meaning you are his, under His protection (Isaiah 43:1).
- Just as the Shunammite woman grabbed hold of the feet of Elisha (II Kings 4:27), so Mary Magdalene grabs hold of Jesus when he calls her name “Mary,” and she realizes who it is (vs. 17). What Christian would not want to remain in close physical contact with Jesus when He is right there? Today our closest facsimiles to “touching/holding Jesus” are: (1) the study and pondering of his holy Scripture. Jesus is the *Logos*, the Word made flesh (John 1:1,14). When we ponder his Word, we spiritually touch Him, and we are changed (equipped) by Him through the guidance of Holy Spirit (II Timothy 3:15-17). (2) A 2nd facsimile for “touching/holding Jesus” is Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper – representing the body of our Lord, broken for us, and the blood of Jesus, redeeming us from sin (I Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:28).
 - A. What thoughts and feelings came up for you while reading Scriptures and this meditation on Jesus’ appearance to Mary of Magdala? Regarding Mary’s recognition of Jesus when he called her by name? Regarding her desire to cling to Jesus who had risen from the tomb? How can your insights serve others?
 - B. Write, journal, or discuss with a partner or another person one significant point that was especially meaningful for you in this reflection. Meditate on that point as a point of reference for reflection, prayer, and support for you and others for a few days.
 - C. Closing Prayer: Lord God, grant me the desire to seek and hold you, to touch your Presence in your Word and in the Lord’s Supper. Lord, give me the grace to inspire others to seek and hold you, loving you and loving others. Amen.

III. Third Meditation (Station): *The Disciples Find the Empty Tomb*: [Read II Kings 13:20-21; Mark 16:1-13; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10].

- Mary Magdalene and other women were the first to discover Jesus’ tomb empty (Mark 16:1-6). After appearing to Mary Magdalene other disciples, namely Peter and John, came

and found the tomb empty, signifying the resurrection of Jesus, as the angel said (vs. 6). As human beings, we have a natural attraction to feelings, thoughts, and life-affirming impulses, like delicious foods and beautiful objects. But we are also averse to things that repulse us, like fears. Arguably the greatest natural human fear is the fear of death, and the fear of death generates the most powerful human reactions. But Christ's death "frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death" (Hebrews 2:15). Christ's tomb stands out as a sacrament of salvation, of redemption. Because of the empty tomb - respected by Christians around the world - Christian funerals become exercises in hope instead of the world's kind of mourning that believes the death of a loved one is permanent. While we Christians value the symbol the empty tomb represents, simultaneously we recognize the fullness of *new life* that it signifies. Note the foreshadowing of Christ's resurrection in the rising from the dead of the man placed in Elisha's tomb (II Kings 13:21). Many bodies of the saints rose alive from the graves when Jesus rose from the dead (Matthew 27:51-53).

- A. Contemplate the above Scriptures and the short devotional. Answer and discuss your thoughts and feelings about this meditation description on the significance of discovering Jesus' empty tomb. Do you believe that Christ's resurrection gives concrete evidence for the Hope of the resurrection of life and eternal life for us?
- B. Meditate on the rising from the dead by the man whose contact with Elisha's bones when placed in his grave - stimulated a miraculous resurrection by God (II Kings 13:20-21). Likewise, meditate on the bodies of saints rising from their graves and being seen in the holy city of Jerusalem on the day of Christ's resurrection (Matthew 27:51-53).
- C. Write, journal, or talk with a partner or another with whom you can share - one main point that really made a difference for you in this meditation. Use that point & the Lord's Prayer as a reference point for reflection, prayer, & encouragement the next few days.
- D. Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, remove from me and all Christians all fear of death. Make our only fear the thought of remaining separated from you. Amen.

IV. Fourth Meditation (Station): *Jesus Walks with the Disciples to Emmaus*: [Read Luke 24:13-32; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 16:13-21].

- Appearances can deceive us. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus looked sad (Luke 24:17), because the one they thought was the Messiah had been crucified and today was the third day since that event (vs. 21). The stranger who walked with them began to expound the Scriptures from the Torah (Law of Moses) and the Neviim (the Prophets) from the Old Testament Hebrew Bible) showing the disciples the things referring to the Christ in the Scriptures. I can surmise that one of the stories that the stranger (Jesus) would have discussed was where the sacrifice of Abraham's son Isaac was spared (Genesis 22:1-18), Yahweh Yireh (the Lord-will-Provide) the substitutionary ram that was sacrificed, and in Abraham's seed all the nations of the world were blessed (vs. 18). A second story that I am certain Jesus re-told to the disciples on their way to Emmaus was the story of Moses making and lifting up a serpent in the wilderness, so that those who were bitten by poisonous serpents could look on the bronze serpent and live, be healed (Isaiah 53:5, and 1 Peter 2:24). Those who were poisoned by the serpents looked at the serpent on the

stake (cross) and were healed (Numbers 21:8-9). So, the Son of Man had to be lifted up, so that all who believed in him would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:14-15). Jesus became a figure of the serpent when people throughout the ages have turned to Him for healing, receiving it - and for salvation, receiving redemption & eternal life. Another story I am almost certain our Lord would have expounded was the story of the bread (*manna*) the Lord provided daily for the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years (Exodus 16:13-21). And in the gospel of John Jesus said that the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, giving life to the world (John 6:33), and He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven" (vs. 41). He was the body, the sacrificial lamb, broken for us (I Corinthians 11:23-24) and for our healing (Isaiah 53:5). Bread, representing the body of our Lord, is the first element in Communion, and it was in the "breaking of bread" that the disciples first recognized that the stranger with whom they had walked on the road to Emmaus - was none other than their Risen Lord Jesus! (Luke 24:30-31). The great events of the Hebrew Bible point to the mysteries of Christ.

- A. What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the reading of Scriptures and this meditation on *Jesus Walks with the Disciples to Emmaus*? Regarding Abraham using the ram as a sacrificial substitute for Isaac - Jesus sacrificed on the cross for our atonement? Regarding Moses' lifting up the serpent in the wilderness that the poisoned would be healed, like Jesus lifted on the cross for all who look to him would inherit eternal life? The manna in the desert and Jesus as the Bread from Heaven who gives life?
 - B. Write or discuss with a partner, or call or email another person one significant point that was especially meaningful for you in this reflection. Meditate on that point and the theme from the Lord's Prayer being highlighted this week in the sermon - as a point of reference for reflection, prayer, and support for you and others.
 - C. Closing Prayer: Lord God, give me a love for reading the sacred Scriptures. Help me to discover in each page your hidden truths, your plan of salvation, your Love and Justice. May I seek your Love, Truth, and Justice, and show love towards others. Amen.
- V. Fifth Meditation (Station): *Jesus Reveals Himself in the Breaking of the Bread*: [Read Nehemiah 9:15; Luke 24: 30-31; John 6:47-58; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29].
- Let us focus again on the visitations by post-Resurrection Jesus. The disciples had to discover or recognize that it was their risen Lord. Beginning with Mary Magdalene, the disciples did not recognize it was Jesus at first. Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the two disciples at their home in Emmaus. Then the eyes of Cleopas and the other disciple were opened, and they RECOGNIZED Jesus (Luke 24:30-31). We often do not consider just how significant the Lord's Supper or Communion is in our Christian faith. As we saw in the previous meditation, the story of the covenant God made with Abraham that through his seed all nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:16-18) - involves the sacrifice of a ram (male sheep), substituted for the son Isaac, representing the humanity that would later be blessed through Abraham, AND presaging the innocent Lamb of God (who would take on the sins of the world - 1 John 2:2). Isaiah 53:1-12 is a powerful statement of how the atonement for the sins of the people would be the sacrifice of a servant of the Lord who would be their sin offering.

- Within Christian circles there is controversy as to whether the “breaking of bread” at the home of one of the disciples in Emmaus was actually Communion, since Jesus had said that he would not partake of the Passover meal, his last supper, until he partook of it with his disciples in paradise (Luke 22:15-18). This is the traditional reason for believing that the “breaking of bread” before the disciples at Emmaus could not have been Communion. The reasoning goes that it must have been the manner in which he broke the bread or served it that caused them to recognize that it was Jesus. Others, like Pastor Fraser, argue that Jesus DID eat with his disciples again during the 40 days after his resurrection. Jesus ate with his disciples when he appeared to them that first evening of his resurrection, eating a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb to show them that he had a real body and was not a ghost (Luke 24:37-42). This interpretation states that since Jesus ate with his disciples before he ascended to heaven, then that implies that the kingdom of God is already here. The “breaking of bread” before the disciples’ eyes at Emmaus is earlier evidence of his sharing Communion with them – pointing to the significance associated with that act. The disciples’ eyes were opened, and they realized that this was Jesus!
- A. What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the reading of Scriptures and this meditation? Consider the substituted ram to atone for the sins of the people under the Law of Moses, especially Leviticus, as you review the passage from Isaiah 53 that foreshadows the Lamb of God who is killed for our transgressions to atone for our sins.
- B. Write or discuss with someone a meaningful point that you gained during this reflection. Meditate on that point and the theme from the Lord’s Prayer being highlighted this week in the sermon - as a reference point for reflection, prayer, and support for you and others.
- C. Closing Prayer: Jesus, may I ponder anew the wonder and majesty of your sacrifice for us. May I see the power that resides in the serving and partaking of Communion, your presence, and may I live out the kingdom life for others, too. Amen.

VI. Sixth Meditation (Station): *Jesus Appears to the Disciples*: (Read Exodus 3:16; Acts 1:16-26; Scriptures listed below for each appearance of Jesus after his Resurrection before his Ascension).

- An Old Testament forerunner of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to his disciples is the statement of God (*Elohim*) to Moses when he sent him to lead his people Israel: “Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me...’” as Jesus appeared to his disciples. These appearances have a central place in our Christian faith, and they have been recounted now for almost 2,000 years. Listed below is a Wesleyan Bible scholar’s number and sequence of Jesus’ appearances to his disciples:³

The Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus to His Disciples

1. Mary Magdalene outside the garden tomb	Mark 16:9-11; John 20:14-18
2. Women returning from the tomb with the angelic message	Matthew 28:8-10

³ Wesleyan Bible scholar Ken Heer lists 11 appearances in the above list, whereas Schofield lists 10 appearances. The reason is that some of the appearances could be described in different ways but were the same appearance of Jesus. For example, numbers 8 & 9 above could both have been the same appearance by Jesus..

3. Peter in Jerusalem, (probably in the afternoon)?	Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5
4. Two disciples on road to Emmaus toward evening	Luke 24:13-31
5. Apostles, except Thomas	Luke 24:33-43; John 20:19-24
6. Apostles, 8 days later, including Thomas	John 20:24-29
7. To 7 Apostles, after fishing on Lake of Tiberias	John 21:1-23
8. Apostles (and other disciples?) on a mountain	Matthew 28:16-20
9. Crowd of five hundred	1 Corinthians 15:6
10. James, brother of Jesus	1 Corinthians 15:7
11. Apostles & disciples who witnessed the Ascension	Luke 24:44-51; Acts 1:3-11

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- The tradition for who would be the 12 Apostles after Judas committed suicide and abdicated his position as one of the 12 – is set in Acts 1:16-26, when Peter stated that Judas must be replaced by another as one of the 12, because Judas had been numbered with the 12 apostles and had obtained a part in their ministry (vs. 17). Peter said the criteria for being one of the 12 was that the apostle would have to be one of the disciples who had accompanied Jesus and the other disciples all the time of Jesus’ ministry from the baptism of John to the ascension of our Lord (verses 21-22). Matthias was to become the new 12th apostle as a witness to Christ’s Resurrection. The significance for keeping historical and Biblical continuity with the Hebrew Bible: As there were 12 tribes of Israel, and Jesus had called 12 apostles – a 12th needed to be called to continue Christ’s original plan.
- A. Ponder the different appearances of Jesus to his apostles & disciples. Discuss a meaningful point that you gained from this reflection. How can you tie this meditation into Renovating your Prayer Life, focusing on the Lord’s Prayer?, as we continue to Pentecost?
- B. Closing Prayer: Our Father in heaven, increase my confidence in God’s plan for my life and for those I help in his kingdom. Make each day a celebration of your wise and loving Providence. Amen.

VII. Seventh Meditation (Station): *Thomas Believes When he Sees & Touches the Risen Lord:* (Read John 20:24-29; Hebrews 11:1).

- Throughout Christian history, Thomas has been called “doubting Thomas” because he told the others of the 11 apostles that he would not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead unless he saw and touched the nail prints and touched Jesus’ side (John 20:25). “Doubting Thomas” reminds us Christians of a valuable lesson: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Jesus even tells Thomas to touch his hands and his side, telling him to be believing, not unbelieving. Although Thomas does not confirm belief in the resurrected Lord until he touches both places on his body, Jesus confirms when Thomas exclaims “my Lord and my God,” that he believes that Jesus is risen (John 20:28). But those who would not see Jesus’ risen body would be blessed because they had not seen and still believed (vs. 29). To declare that faith pertains to “things not seen” does not mean that the virtue of faith falls outside reality. God and those things that are the MOST REAL are “things not seen,”

⁴ Ken Heer, 2007, *Luke: A Commentary for Bible Students*, in Wesleyan Bible Commentary Series. (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House), 322.

Includes Schofield list: F. J. May and H. Lynn Stone, *Equipping the Saints in the Love of the Father: A Study of the Gospel of John*, Section III, 69.

that is, spiritual, yet constitute the foundation of all Reality. God is Spirit, and God's physical creation derives in one way or another from God's Spirit: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), implying that God created everything that is!

- A. Meditate upon Jesus appearance to the 11, Thomas among them that time. How do you grapple with Thomas believing only if he could physically see and touch Jesus? Consider times where you have not believed unless you could see and touch. Discuss with someone times when you have doubted because your circumstances did not show what you were being asked to believe in – like healing, or deliverance, or justice?
- B. Incorporate this meditation on believing "things not seen" into your prayer life. How can you use this to pray the Lord's Prayer more deeply in *Renovating your Prayer Life*?
- C. Closing Prayer: Our Father in heaven, deepen my faith in the saving work of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me hold on to the mysteries of Christ that are "things not seen," carrying a *kingdom living* faith into action - service for others. Amen.

VIII. Eighth Meditation (Station): *Jesus Appears to 7 Apostles on Shore of Sea of Galilee*: (Read John 21:1-23; Luke 5:3-10).

- Many of the acts of Jesus and much of his ministry took place in and around the Sea of Galilee. Seven of the apostles went fishing, led by Simon Peter (John 21:3). After fishing all night and catching nothing, they heard a voice from the shore telling them to cast their net on the right side of the boat and they would find some (vs. 6). The catch of fish was 153, a miraculously large number, and the person on the shore called them to come and eat breakfast. Without a word, the disciples all knew that he was Jesus. The gospel of John seems to use symbolism related to numbers. For example, John 6:66 states that many of Jesus' disciples turned back and never walked with him again. The number 666 is the mark of the Beast – Revelation 13:17-18. Why does the writer of the Gospel of John tell us the exact number of the fish, unless the number signified a deeper meaning?! A popular explanation for the number 153 is that it is a triangular number built out of the number 17.⁵ The sum of whole numbers from 1 – 17 is 153 (1+2+3+...+17=153). The triangle is pictured when imagining rows of marbles making the shape of a triangle, with the base containing 17 marbles, each row containing one fewer than the row below: 17, 16, 15... 1, totaling 153 marbles completing the triangle.⁶
- Note that this is the second time that Jesus performed such a miracle of a huge catch of fish after the disciples had been fishing all night. The first time was at the beginning of their ministry (Luke 5:3-10), when Jesus told them that they would become fishers of men. Ancient church fathers explained that the number 153, the number of fish caught (see above) represents every kind of fish known to the ancient world. So, Christ makes his apostles *fishers of people*, every person on the earth!⁷ This second and last time

⁵ Triangles have long fascinated Christian philosophers, who found the symbol both for a spiritual base for reality, the Trinity, and a physical base for reality: the triangle is the simplest building block for other geometric shapes.

⁶ Joseph Dongell, 1997, *John: A Commentary for Bible Students*, in Wesleyan Bible Commentary Series. (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House), 245.

⁷ Father Romanus Cessario, O.P., "Via Lucis: The Paschal Way of the Light," in *Magnificat*, Rev. Sebastian White, O.P., Ed., (New York: www.magnificat.com, April, 2021), 39-40.

using this kind of fishing miracle is at the end of Jesus' ministry - as the Resurrected Lord ensures that his disciples continue to be fishers of humans. He confirms with Peter that if he loves (Jesus) then he will feed his sheep. Peter would be the first leader of the disciples spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, making disciples of people (verses 15-17).

- A. After meditating on this devotional, what do you think is the significance of the number 153? Why a triangle? Is the number of the Trinity relevant? Or is the number significant because it represents every kind of fish known to the ancient world? Or some other reason? Discuss with another.
- B. Focus on "Renovating your Prayer Life" by focusing on praying and living the Lord's Prayer in a new way, following our CCF sermon series.
- C. Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, you provide everything one needs to sustain body, soul, and spirit. Grant that I will always rejoice in making your saving presence known to the people of the world, making disciples of people. Amen.

IX. Ninth Meditation (Station): *On the Mountain Jesus Authorizes his Disciples for the Great Commission* (Read Genesis 22:17; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:14-15; 2:1,4,14,40-41).

- As God blessed Abraham for his obedience to God, putting God above everything else, God honored Abraham and blessed him abundantly, making his descendants as "numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore" (Gen. 22:17). This foreshadows that Jesus' ministry will be honored by the spread of the gospel in the early church by the first disciples. The gospel of Matthew declares what is now known by Christians as the *Great Commission*, Matthew 28:16-20) as the last act of the Risen Christ before his Ascension to heaven. On the appointed mountain in Galilee, Jesus appeared to the 11 disciples (vs. 16), and they saw Jesus and worshiped, but some doubted (vs. 17).⁸ Jesus had all authority (vs. 18), and commissioned them to "Go... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Jesus assures his disciples that he is with them always, to the end of the age (19-20).
- God's plan of salvation remains the same for all peoples and nations. Just as we profess that God is the one Creator of heaven and earth, the Alpha (Beginning), we also proclaim that God is the final End, the Omega, the completion of all that exists (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 1:8,11)! Christian scholars and Bible teachers often point to the human frailties

⁸ Note in verse 17, that most of the 11 disciples (apostles) saw the risen Jesus and worshiped Him, but some doubted. Why would there be doubt? This is the 11 closest disciples to Jesus on the mountain, receiving the Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations." Most worshiped, appropriate for the resurrected Savior. The doubt may be that Matthew is noting the mixture of faith and unbelief that accompanied the first appearances of the risen Lord. [For example, the women were afraid but filled with joy (Matt. 28:8)]. Or maybe Matthew implies that there may be some weeds among the wheat already (see parable of wheat and weeds – Matt. 13:24-30). After all, Judas had already shown that he was a traitor to Jesus. Was there lingering doubt because the Messiah was supposed to fulfill and establish an earthly kingdom, like King David? Or maybe their completed faith in Jesus was still in process and would continue to mature as they worked in their missionary ministries in the years to come. Matthew seems more comfortable than some modern Christians with the fact of doubt among some of Jesus' followers. – [Roger L. Hahn, *Matthew: A Commentary for Bible Students*, 345-46]

of Jesus' first disciples and their relatively small number (only 120 on the day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian church – Acts 1:14-15; 2:1,4,14,40-41). The 12 apostles and other disciples were ordinary people, not from the priestly line or royalty, and most were uneducated. Thus, the expansion of the Christian faith throughout all parts of the world is a testimony to the divine light and power that moved the disciples to make disciples wherever they went. Jubilation at Christ's Resurrection still erupts around the world.

- A. As you ponder Jesus' last act on earth before his Ascension, how do you respond to Jesus request that the disciples "go and make disciples of all nations"? How does this relate to your mission in life? What do you make of the gospel spreading around the world still to this day, from such humble beginnings, 120 mostly ordinary people? Discuss with someone else. [Extra Credit: Why did some of the disciples doubt? (See footnote). How do you deal with doubt?]
- B. Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for entering my life and drawing me into your family, your Christian church. Give me the grace to take my part in making disciples of all nations, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Meditations X, XI, and XII Complete the Devotional Series: Ascension, Praying for Holy Spirit, and Day of Pentecost

- X. Tenth Meditation (Station): *Jesus Ascends into Heaven*: [Read 2 Kings 2:9-11; Luke 24:49-53; Acts 1:1-11; Mark 16:19. Read *Ten Days of Praise: Ascension to Pentecost, May 26 – June 4, 2022*, pages 2-3 (or *Seek God for the City 2022*, 50-52)].
 - This meditation begins the movement from Jesus' Ascension to the Day of Pentecost. For the next 10 days, use the online 14-page booklet called *Ten Days of Praise*, or the *Seek God for the City 2022*, pages 50-62, used during the prayer season of Lent. The booklet will have a different devotional reading and prayers for each day, starting with the Ascension May 26th. Each day leading up to Meditation XII, the Day of Pentecost, will center around a different aspect of praying for Jesus to send the Holy Spirit and bring an outpouring of the Holy Spirit throughout the entire nation. The questions below center around the themes and readings in that booklet for Jesus' Ascension.
 - The ascension of Jesus into heaven is foreshadowed by the ascension of Elijah - taken in a fiery chariot by a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). "And with gladsome light they watched him (Jesus) as he sought the stars, and with the ears of their joyful hearts knew that the king of the world was taken up" (Bede the Venerable). No wonder many devout Christians find in the Ascension their favorite mystery of Christ's life. We find our faith strengthened, our hope renewed, and our love inflamed, because Christ thus assures us that we are not left orphans.⁹ Jesus ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19).
- A. Christ Ascends to Heaven, page 2 (50-51):

⁹ Father Romanus Cessario, O.P., "Via Lucis: The Paschal Way of the Light," in *Magnificat*, Rev. Sebastian White, O.P., Ed., (New York: www.magnificat.com, April, 2021), 42.

1. What does the author Steve Hawthorne of *WayMakers* mean when he writes “Christ’s ascension to heaven means that He is more present than if He had remained on earth”? [See the next paragraph, page 2 (50)]. Discuss or write.
 2. Read Luke 24:49-53, Acts 1:6-11, and the two sections “It Really Happened!,” page 2 (50-51) and “Lifted into the Sky,” page 2 (51). Read and meditate on the section “Recognizing Jesus as the Ascended King,” page 3 (52). How do you think you would have reacted if you had been there to witness Jesus’ Ascension? Discuss or write.
- B. Read the Ascension devotional in the booklet, “Day 1 Thursday May 26,” page 3 (52).
Pray the three prayers on the bottom half of that page, and praise/pray in that spiritual posture as time permits.

XI. Eleventh Meditation (Station): *The Disciples Wait in Daily Prayer the Coming of the Holy Spirit*:

[10 Days] Use this meditation with the *Ten Days of Praise* devotional booklet, uploaded with Meditation X. Thanks.

Ezekiel 11: 19-20: “I will give them a new (one) heart, and put a new spirit within them... so that they may follow my statutes... and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” This is a forerunner of the coming of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised he would send when he left to go back to heaven. This 11th meditation is being adapted from just one devotional, to include the 10 days of praying reminiscent of the 10 days of continual prayer the 120 disciples made in the upper room and in the temple in Jerusalem, waiting prayerfully the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:11-15). [See devotional booklet *Ten Days of Praise*¹⁰, or *Seek God for the City 2022*, pages 50-63].

1. [Ascension Day – May 26th; see Meditation X and prayers for Day 1 in *Ten Days of Praise*].
 - Steve Hawthorne writes: “The first united prayer season of the church got underway on the day that Jesus ascended to heaven. They prayed constantly in the upper room until Pentecost morning. During these ten days, we invite you to join with people from many different countries in giving praise to our magnificent Lord. The following day is Pentecost,”¹¹ the day Christians celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, who guides us.
2. Day 2 – May 27th, page 4 (53): “Christ Exalted as King and Priest” – Ponder Psalm 110. Read and meditate on Hebrews 5:8-10; 7:17-28; John 15:26-16:1-15.
 - Read and meditate on the Day 2 devotional. Who is this person who governs all things with God? How could it be possible for a human to be so exalted? Was it a mystery to David, too, as he wrote the psalm?
 - Three (3) decrees about Jesus’ enthronement in Psalm 110:
 - i. Co-enthroned with God – Exalt Him as Ascendant King
 - ii. Ruling over His (Jesus’) enemies – Praise Him as Overcoming Lord
 - iii. Leading His people in worship as a high priest – Follow Him as the Only Global Priest – in the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:8-10; 7:17-28).

¹⁰*Ten Days of Praise* Devotional website with WayMakers gives access to this prayer devotional online, including a Spanish version: waymakers.org/pray/ten-days-of-praise/

¹¹ *Ten Days of Praise* Devotional by Steve Hawthorne, 2022, (Austin TX: WayMakers), 2.

- Pray the three prayers given in the bottom half of Day 2 devotional, one for each of the 3 decrees listed above. Praise, worship, and pray as time permits. Incorporate prayer from the Lord's Prayer, relevant to our sermon series as you pray.
 - Begin to pray into "Come, Holy Spirit," as Jesus told his disciples in John 16 that he would send an Advocate (Helper), the Spirit of Truth, elsewhere called the Comforter, Paraclete, and Guide. Jesus had to leave so He could send the Advocate (John 16:7).
3. Day 3 – May 28th, page 5 (54): "Christ Endowed with Authority" – Read and meditate on the Day 3 devotional in *Ten Days of Praise*, focusing on Daniel 7:13-14 and Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20.
- God Entrusts Kingly Authority to a Human: One like a Son of Man is given dominion, glory and a kingdom. The resurrected Christ declared He had all authority on heaven and earth. What does it mean to you that God took on full humanity in Jesus?
 - Pray the two prayers given in the bottom sections of Day 3 devotional. Pray into these prayers as time permits.
 - Pray in "Come, Holy Spirit." Note in Mark 16:15-20 that Jesus is already foreshadowing one of the gifts of Holy Spirit, the gift of "new tongues (languages)" in verse 17c. Pray for a new outpouring of Holy Spirit to come and sweep our nation and the world, beginning with me (you).
4. Day 4 – May 29th, page 6 (55): "Worthy is the Lamb - to Be Worshiped by All Peoples"
- Christ's Costly Sacrifice Makes Him Worthy to Be Served: Read and meditate on the Day 4 devotional and upon Revelation 5:1-14; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.
 - Pray the two prayers at the bottom of page 6 (55), singing of Jesus as the only Worthy One and waiting with expectation for the Worship of Christ by All Nations!
 - Incorporate prayers relevant to our *Renovate my Prayer Life* sermon series – The Lord's Prayer. Wait and pray in a posture of expectation of Holy Spirit's coming. Pray into Holy Spirit gifting you (re-gifting you) with gift(s) in which Holy Spirit wants you to operate (1 Cor. 12:1-11).
5. Day 5 – May 30th, page 7 (56): "Worthy is the Lamb – to Bring Forgiveness and Reconciliation." Read and meditate on the Day 5 devotional and on Revelation 1:4-6; 5:6-9; and John 1:29-30; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.
- Overcoming the Sin of the World – Jesus (Rev. 5:6, 9; John 1:29; Rev. 1:5-6)
 - Pray the two prayers at the bottom of page 7 (56), reveling in the Love of the Lamb and praying for the Lamb to Empower His People to Be Reconcilers. Pray into these prayers as time permits. Incorporate prayers relevant to our *Renovate my Prayer Life* sermon series – The Lord's Prayer.
 - Pray "Come, Holy Spirit, I need you." Pray for Holy Spirit to show you/me how to work and communicate well with the varieties of gifts and members in the church body, the body of Christ, praying that we realize more deeply how/that we all need each other and what each brings to the table (1 Cor. 12:12-26).
6. Day 6 – May 31st, page 8 (57): "Worthy is the Lamb – as the Shepherd of His People:" Read and meditate on the Day 6 devotional in *Ten Days of Praise* (or *Seek God for the City 2022*) booklet, focusing on Revelation 7:9-17; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31a.

- We Are Already Home, but Still on the Journey – The “coming out of the tribulation” language of Revelation 7:14 is what kind of language? How is that significant? How are the people whose robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb both at home and yet still on the journey?
 - Re-read the Scriptures from Revelation 7 for the two prayers in the bottom two sections of the Day 6 devotional. Pray the prayers there, rejoicing in the Fullness of our Christian family and praising the Lamb as our Shepherd. Incorporate the Lord’s Prayer themes from this week’s sermon during your prayer time, as time permits and as led by Holy Spirit. “Come, Holy Spirit, I need you.”
7. Day 7 – June 1st, page 9 (58): “Worthy is the Lamb – as the One Who Overcomes Evil:” Read and meditate on the Day 7 devotional, focusing on Revelation 11:15-18; 7:9-12; 12:9-12; 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13.
- Facing Fear by Loving Jesus More Than Life – threatened by death, they prevail because of their great love for Jesus.
 - Read the Scriptures for Day 7 and sing songs of Jesus’ salvation for all. Praise Christ for his Love Overcoming the Fear of Death. Pray and Praise the prayers in the bottom two sections and continue in prayer & worship as time permits and as Spirit led. Pray for persecuted Christians throughout the world.
 - Incorporate the Lord’s Prayer themes from this week’s sermon during your prayer time. Seek Holy Spirit afresh and anew! Seek Holy Spirit for the “still more excellent way” (1 Cor. 13). Pray into Holy Spirit as time permits.
8. Day 8 – June 2nd, page 10 (59): “Worthy is the Lamb – to Judge All Powers and People:” Read and ponder the Day 8 devotional, focusing on Psalm 110, Revelation 6:12-17; 17:14; 19:1-2,5-6; 1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 26-33.
- Read the Scriptures for the Day 8 devotional, with an ear for singing worship songs that fit the themes of God as a God of Wondrous Justice, Rejoicing in Honoring the Lamb who suffered for our salvation and rose from the dead, thereby overcoming Death and hell.
 - The Wonderful Judgment of God Setting Things Right (Justice): “Unjust powers will find no escape...” Give examples of “unjust powers.” How can you and I live out justice in “Kingdom of God” living?
 - Pray and Praise the prayers in the bottom two sections, rejoicing in the Honor of being called at times to suffer with Christ for His great glory. Continue in prayer and worship as Spirit leads and as time permits. Pray for Holy Spirit to come and *Renovate my Prayer Life*, as we continue the sermon series on the Lord’s Prayer. Pray “Come, Holy Spirit...”
9. Day 9 – June 3rd, page 11 (60): “Worthy is the Lamb – to Bring to Himself His Glorious Bride:” Read and meditate on Day 9 devotional, focusing on Revelation 19:4-9; Ephesians 5:25-33; Romans 8:35-39; 12:1-8.
- As you read the devotional today, focus again on the Scriptures that point to the analogy of Christ as bridegroom and the church-at-large (*ecclesia*) as the bride. This metaphor is poignant at many levels, not the least of which is that of an actual marriage of husband and wife (see the Ephesians passage above). How deep is

Christ's love for his bride: his church – you, me, every Christian, and those who have not yet become part of his bride but will? (See Romans 8:35-39).

- Continue pondering Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gifts as you pray into Rom. 12:1-8.
- Pray and praise the Scriptures and prayers in the bottom two sections of the Day 9 devotional. Pray for Holy Spirit to come and *Renovate my Prayer Life*, as we continue the sermon series on the Lord's Prayer and pray for our prayer life to continue to deepen and intensify as we pray in a posture of waiting for the Holy Spirit.

10. Day 10 – June 4th, page 12 (61): "Worthy is the Lamb – to Receive Praise from All Peoples:" Read and meditate on Day 10 devotional, focusing on Revelation 5:8-14; 15:1-4; Exodus 15:1-18; Romans 12:9-21.

- What are some of the words and themes that the Song of Moses (Ex. 15:1-18) proclaimed about God's Mighty Works that could be incorporated into the heavenly songs about the Worthy Lamb of God, as exemplified in Rev. 15:3-4? Time permitting, sing praises to the Worthy Lamb using themes both from Exodus 15 and Revelation 15.
- Pray, rejoice, and praise the Scriptures and prayers in the bottom three sections of the Day 10 devotional. Name Him as King of All Nations: "May Your Kingdom come!"
- Continue pondering Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gifts as you pray into Rom. 12:9-21.
- Pray for Holy Spirit to come and *Renovate my Prayer Life*, as we continue the sermon series on the Lord's Prayer and pray for our prayer life to continue to deepen and intensify as we pray in a posture of waiting for the imminent fresh outpouring of Holy Spirit.

XII. Twelfth Meditation (Last Station): *Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit Promised to His Disciples:* [Read Ezekiel 37:14; Acts 2:1-21, 29-33. Extra Credit: Read 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, & 14].

- "I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live..." (Ezekiel 37:14a). The long-awaited Holy Spirit has come! Holy Spirit arrives in the form of tongues of Fire (Acts 2:3), not in the form of a Dove this time (Matthew 3:16). The Spirit comes with Force and Power in a sound like the rush of a mighty wind (Acts 2:2).
- Have you ever wondered about how different the disciples were after the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost? Before Jesus sent the Advocate, Philip did not understand that one who had seen Jesus had seen the Father (John 14:7-10). When Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000 men plus women & children with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish, taking up 12 baskets of leftovers and likewise fed 4,000 plus women & children, taking up 7 large baskets of leftovers, Jesus still had to ask them how they did not understand when he warned them to beware the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod (Mark 8:15-21). Peter denied Jesus 3 times and grievously affirmed later to Jesus 3 times that he loved him. Jesus still gave him the leadership by saying to him "Feed my sheep" 3 times (John 21:15-17). Notice how different Peter and the apostles were on the Day of Pentecost after they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter preached his first sermon and 3,000 souls were

saved and baptized that day (Acts 2:14-21,29-33,37-41)! Jesus had said that he needed to go away, so the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Advocate could come and teach them all things and remind them what Jesus had taught them (John 16:7, 14:26, 15:26).

- Tower of Babel was destroyed (Genesis 11:9), and God gave the people many different languages, causing them to be unable to communicate with those of other tongues. But on the Day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit gave a heavenly language that allowed the language of each of the Jewish pilgrims to be heard in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They heard the disciples speak in their own language (or they understood the disciples' Aramaic as hearing it in their own language. Either way, it is/was a gift of Holy Spirit). God erected a new "Tower," the Christian church that Holy Spirit could communicate with people of all language groups – uniting all peoples under one language – known by Holy Spirit, and manifested by the disciples as the Holy Spirit came with Power and authority.¹²
- A. Meditate on how different the disciples and the new church became once Holy Spirit came. Respond to what Holy Spirit is drawing you to see, consider regarding Holy Spirit, the early church, and the forcefulness with which the Holy Spirit manifested to the disciples and the powerful effect on the Jews gathered for the feast of Pentecost – in which 3,000 converts joined the new church. Discuss and/or write your responses.
- B. Do you seek the Holy Spirit fervently and continuously, as the disciples did in the upper room and in the temple? Are you praying for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit this season for yourself, your church, your nation, and the world? A Carmelite nun Mariam Baouardy wrote: I called on the Holy Spirit praying, "It is you who made us know Jesus. The Apostles spent a long time with him without ever comprehending him; but the *fire you sent down on them* made them understand him. You will also make me understand him. Come, my consolation; come, my joy, come, my peace, my strength, my light. Come, give me the light to find the spring where I can quench my thirst. One ray of your light is enough to show me Jesus as he is."¹³ Spend time praying, seeking a fresh anointing of Holy Spirit! Incorporate focus on the Lord's Prayer as we continue our awesome sermon series on *Renovate my Prayer Life*. Spend time praying on areas before God that most need growth in your own life.
- C. Note that one of the ways the Holy Spirit gives the gift of languages to equip the church - is that the Body of Christ, the church, the *Ecclesia*, consists of people from every language, nation, ethnicity, race, and people group. Holy Spirit translates and interprets ALL those languages. Read & ponder the devotional for Pentecost Day, inserted below from page 13 of *Ten Days of Praise* devotional. Contemplate the 3 Scriptures and the 3 prayers in the bottom portion of the devotional. Pray the themes as time permits.

Pentecost Sunday: June 5, 2022¹⁴

¹² Extra Credit: Do you pray in a heavenly language? Do you seek gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the more excellent way – the way of Love? Do you seek the gift of prophecy? To pray in a heavenly language and to receive a gift of interpretation of heavenly languages for the edification of the church? (See 1 Corinthians, chapters 12, 13, and 14).

¹³ Mariam Baouardy (St. Mary of Jesus Crucified), "Come, Holy Spirit" in *Magnificat*, May 2021, 368.

¹⁴ "Ten Days of Praise: Ascension to Pentecost, May 26 – June 4, 2022," published by WayMakers, 2022, page 13. The Day of Pentecost devotional is in *Seek God for the City 2022*, page 62.

Pentecost Day: The Exalted Christ Pours Out the Father's Promise

The Fullness of God's Spirit for the Fulfillment of His Purpose

On Pentecost, Peter declared that Jesus had not only been raised from the dead, but that He had been enthroned with God in the heavens. The ascension of Jesus does not mean that He is absent. He is all the more present, fulfilling the Father's will, co-working with His people, who have been empowered by the promised gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Having prayed and praised with the Scriptures for days, they were speaking exuberantly about "the great deeds of God" (Acts 2:11). God's Spirit empowered them to speak so that people from other lands and languages could hear what was being said in their mother tongue. This was a sign of an even greater work of God to come: People in every place, tribe and tongue will hear the gospel.

Exalted to the Father. Present by the Spirit

This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. – Acts 2:32-33

Risen Jesus, we honor You as King. Father Almighty, we receive the gift of Your Spirit. And Spirit of the Living God, we delight in the fullness of Your love and power. You, precious Spirit, renew and empower us to work alongside of our Lord Jesus. We love to glorify our Lord Jesus by our worship and our witness. We have been filled with the Spirit so that the earth will be filled with Your glory.

His Voice Will be Heard in Every Tribe and Tongue

There were...devout people from every people under heaven... Each one of them was hearing...in his own language. – Acts 2:5-6

In that city on Pentecost morning, there were people from every major ethnicity under heaven. Each one was clearly hearing the gospel in their own language. We rejoice in hope that soon You will send Your people to make Your voice heard in every place and people on the face of the earth.

He Will Hear Himself Praised in Every Language

We hear them in our own languages speaking of the mighty deeds of God. – Acts 2:11

You are worthy to be praised with all the distinctive beauties of each of the diverse peoples. Sanctified by Your Son, the art and song of every culture will bring You glory. We rejoice in hope that You will hear Yourself praised by every tribe and in every tongue.