

-- 40 DAY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL --

GOD IS...ALL AROUND US



Inspired by

"IMAGES OF GOD"

INTRODUCTION

This Lenten Devotional was inspired and based on the children's book, "Images of God for Young Children" by Marie-Helene Delval and illustrated by Barbara Nascimbeni. The book is described as: "It is impossible to know what God looks like. But the Bible describes many other ways that God is revealed to us. God is joy and wisdom. God is light, and bread, and breath. We have seen God's face in Jesus Christ. This book uses simple language to help young children discover these images of God in their world."

Though the book is written for young children, I read it and realized how good of a reminder these images are for all ages, especially during Lent, a time focused on our relationship with God. A great way to connect with God is to start seeing God more in all that is around us. It is an important reminder that God is not an old man sitting in the clouds, but is part of all creation and works in and among us to bring about good and righteousness in the world.

~Pastor Kelsey

THE DEVOTIONAL

The Devotional goes through the 40 days of Lent. You may not know that the 40 day count between Ash Wednesday and Easter does not include Sundays, as those are thought of as "mini-Easters" focused on the upcoming joy of the resurrection instead of the somber reverence taken on through the rest of Lent. This Devotional follows that tradition and gives a daily devotional for Monday through Saturday.

Each day includes the text and paired illustration for each of the 40 images of God shared in the book, a Psalm that connects to the theme, a short reflection written by Pastor Kelsey, and a prayer from the #PictureLent series that is based on the Psalms this year.

You can learn more about that Lent series at pictureadvent.weebly.com.

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DAY 17: GOD IS A PROMISE

MAR. 8



PSALM 59:9-13

9 I keep looking for you, my strength,
because God is my stronghold.
10 My loving God will come to meet me.
God will allow me to look down on my
enemies.
11 Don't kill them, or my people might
forget;
instead, by your power
shake them up and bring them down,
you who are our shield and my Lord.
12 For the sin of their mouths,
the words that they speak,
let them be captured in their pride.
For the curses and lies they repeat,
13 finish them off in anger;
finish them off until they are gone!
Then let it be known to the ends of the
earth
that God rules over Jacob. Selah

Because of this, we can be sure
that life is stronger than death,
and that love is stronger than hate.
Because of God, we can believe
that goodness will one day fill the
Earth,
and that there will no longer be any
wickedness,
because he has promised this.
We can help make this promise
come true a little each day.

REFLECTION:

This whole forty days of Lent is all about
preparing ourselves for Easter. As we find
ourselves at nearly the halfway point of Lent, it
is a good moment to remember what we are
looking forward to. Easter is a celebration of the
promise that God made to the world through
Jesus' resurrection. Jesus as God embodied
that promise, that promise of life overcoming
death, of love bringing more than hate, of
goodness being the way of God's Kingdom, of
the end of all wickedness. God is that promise
of life, love, and goodness. Hallelujah!

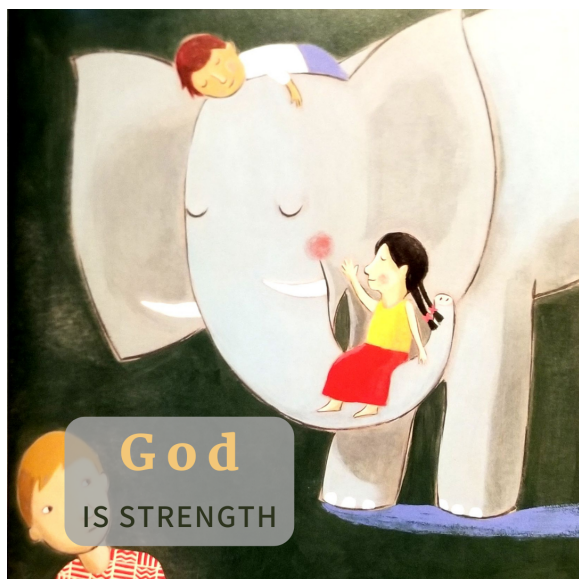
PRAYER:

Creator God, lead us gently in love. Guide us
as we seek your way through the tumble-weeds
of our lives so we may find our path with
confidence. Prepare our hands to feed the
souls of those we walk beside to be at the
ready with compassion. Allow our being to
show forgiveness to those who have shown us
harm, by allowing your hand to heal us both.
Design for us a path of justice that will lead us
to you. Amen.¹⁷

¹⁷ Written by Nichea VerVeer Guy

DAY 18: GOD IS STRENGTH

MAR. 9



PSALM 28:6-9

6 Bless the Lord

because he has listened to my request for mercy!

7 The Lord is my strength and my shield.
My heart trusts him.

I was helped, my heart rejoiced,
and I thank him with my song.

8 The Lord is his people's strength;
he is a fortress of protection for his anointed one.

9 Save your people, God!
Bless your possession!
Shepherd them and carry them for all time!

There is no love stronger than his,
no gentleness or tenderness
more powerful than God's!
All that God has given us --
forgiveness, life, Joy --
comes from his great strength.
And yet, he does so with such
gentleness
that no one is forced to accept.

REFLECTION:

God is strength. All that God is and brings us comes from God's great strength. Even God's gentleness and tenderness with us comes from God's strength in being what all of us need at the same time. God's strength is what we pull from when we need help to persevere, to do the hard right things, and to work on transforming ourselves. God's strength is always there for us. We may not always feel it, but it is here for us. We can know it is there every time we make it through something we thought would destroy us, when we make the harder decision that brings about God's Kingdom, or when we find ourselves changed for the better.

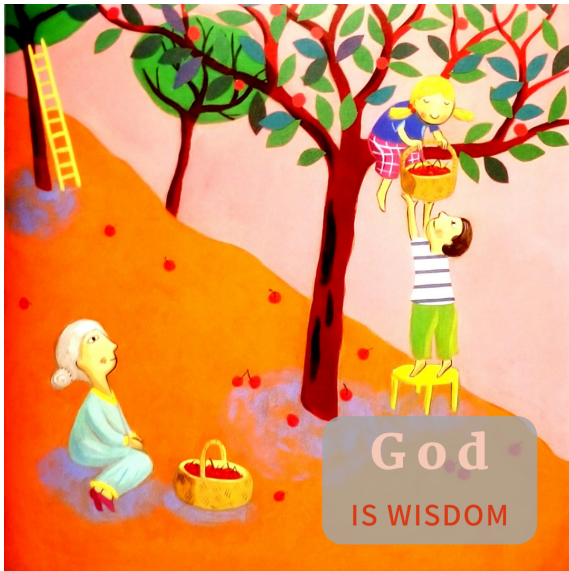
PRAYER:

God of wonder and beauty and strength, help us pour ourselves out to you in praise. Help us look for you, trust in you and declare your goodness to the world. Amen.¹⁸

¹⁸ Written by Rev. Karen Horan

DAY 19: GOD IS WISDOM

MAR. 10



PSALM 104:24-30

24 Lord, you have done so many things!
You made them all so wisely!
The earth is full of your creations!
25 And then there's the sea, wide and deep,
with its countless creatures—
living things both small and large.
26 There go the ships on it,
and Leviathan, which you made, plays in it!
27 All your creations wait for you
to give them their food on time.
28 When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled
completely full!
29 But when you hide your face, they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to dust.
30 When you let loose your breath, they are
created, and you make the surface of the
ground brand-new again.

Sometimes what happens on Earth
seems crazy!
People kill, wound, and imprison other
people;
they destroy the animals and ruin the
planet.
And yet, the earth and the heavens are
So Beautiful!
People are beautiful when they work
together
to make life good for one another.
Then they bear the image of God,
who created the world with his wisdom.

REFLECTION:

God knows best! There is much in the world that doesn't make sense to us. So often does the guidance we feel from God doesn't seem to add up in the moment. But God knows us better than anyone, God knows the world through all time, and God knows what is best for the flourishing of all creation. God's wisdom created all the beautiful intricacies of the world and God's wisdom keeps the world turning. It is this wise God that guides us and hears our prayers and listens to our concerns.

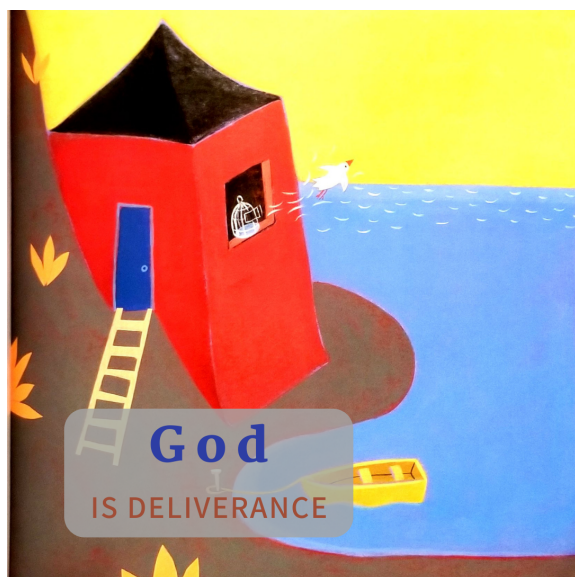
PRAYER:

Gracious God, we are grateful for the people and places you have put in our lives. We thank you for the times you have nudged us out of sadness toward joy. Be with us as we seek to make joy and gratitude the foundation of our days. Amen.¹⁹

¹⁹ Written by Bridget Nelson

DAY 20: GOD IS DELIVERANCE

MAR. 11



PSALM 3:1-8

1 O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me;

2 many are saying to me, "There is no help for you in God."*Selah*

3 But you, O Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.

4 I cry aloud to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy hill.*Selah*

5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.

6 I am not afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

7 Rise up, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.

8 Deliverance belongs to the Lord; may your blessing be on your people!

God can deliver us
when we are locked up
by things that keep us from being
loving and joyful and generous,
everything that prevents us
from looking at life with confidence.

REFLECTION:

Our God of deliverance brings hope in the most hopeless situations. We often talk about Jesus delivering us from our sins, delivering us from condemnation, delivering us into salvation. We don't often think about the deliverance God brings us in the other parts of life. God also delivers us when we find love instead of hate, when we find joy in the midst of sadness, when we give instead of being greedy. God delivers us each moment we become more like who God knows we can be and wants us to be. Each moment we accept God into our life more. God delivers us again and again in big and small ways however much we need it.

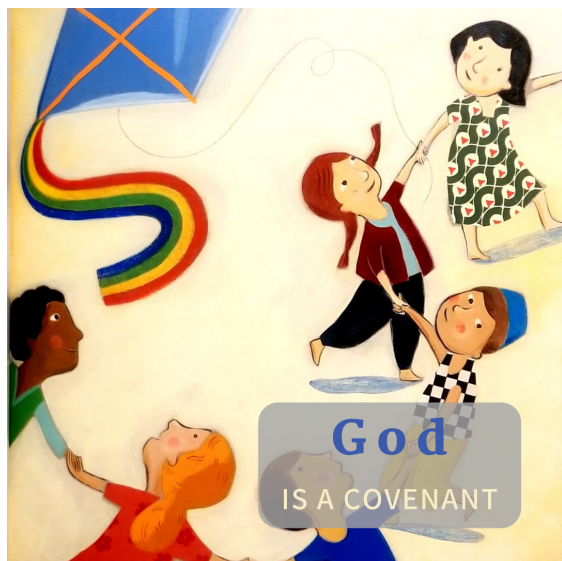
PRAYER:

God, the world seems scary and dangerous to us. We long for your comfort! Help us to look to you, to sense your presence and to feel your loving arms around us. Amen.²⁰

²⁰ Written by Katie Myers

DAY 21: GOD IS COVENANT

MAR. 12



PSALM 61:1-5

- 1 God, listen to my cry;
pay attention to my prayer!
- 2 When my heart is weak,
I cry out to you from the very ends of
the earth.
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I am
- 3 because you have been my refuge,
a tower of strength in the face of the enemy.
- 4 Please let me live in your tent forever!
Please let me take refuge
in the shelter of your wings! Selah
- 5 Because you, God, have heard my
promises;
you've given me the same possession
as those who honor your name.

When couples give each other rings,
it is a sign that they want to be linked
all the days of their lives.

There is a beautiful story that tells how,
long ago, God gave the ring of a
rainbow

to his beloved people,
promising that he would be with them,
now and always.

REFLECTION:

Just as God is a promise, God is a God of Covenants. God does not just make promises with us one way, but has continually worked with God's people to make agreements for both sides. God shared with the Israelites rules for living and promised them relationship and blessings in return. God's biggest Covenant came as the "New Covenant" in Jesus. With Jesus we were taught so much about how God wants us to live and have faith and were promised the beauty and goodness of being part of the Kingdom of God. Unlike covenants between humans, a covenant with God can be trusted to live up to the promise and follow through with plenty of grace for when we fumble. May we keep committing to God, keeping up our side of the covenant and accepting God's gifts in return.

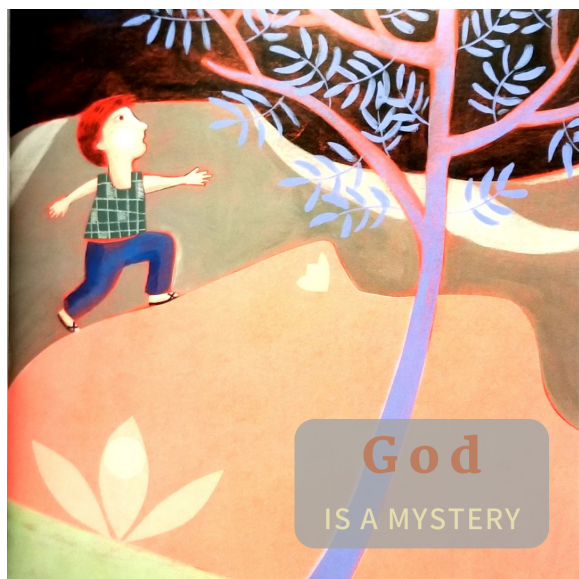
PRAYER:

God of Light,
Thank you for teaching us how to be more like
you, and for giving us ways to show you how
much we love you. We sing, we pray, we trust in
you, and we listen as you speak to us, and guide
us. We pray that we can be your light here on
Earth. Amen.²¹

²¹ Written by Erica Kozlowski

DAY 22: GOD IS A MYSTERY

MAR. 13



PSALM 22:1-5, 19-20

- 1 My God! My God,
why have you left me all alone?
Why are you so far from saving me—
so far from my anguished groans?
- 2 My God, I cry out during the day,
but you don't answer;
even at nighttime I don't stop.
- 3 You are the holy one, enthroned.
You are Israel's praise.
- 4 Our ancestors trusted you—
they trusted you and you rescued them;
- 5 they cried out to you and they were saved;
they trusted you and they weren't ashamed.
- 19 But you, Lord! Don't be far away!
You are my strength! Come quick and help me!
- 20 Deliver me from the sword.
Deliver my life from the power of the dog.

God is present everywhere,
and yet some say that he is not there.
He reigns over the world with his love,
and yet the world is full of misery.
He wants us to know him,
and yet he doesn't show himself.
He is completely unlike us,
and yet he makes us in His image.
But because God is a mystery,
we have to work to understand him
better.

REFLECTION:

God is a mystery. People have believed in and been in relationship with God for centuries, yet we are still learning new things about God and God's hopes for the world. As the world moves and changes, there is more to figure out about how God would want us to interact with it. We can't know the answers to all of our questions about God until we are fully in God's presence. It can be easy to get discouraged in not having all of our questions answered about God and it can bring us doubts. It is okay to wonder and have doubts, but may we also accept that much of God will remain a mystery and enjoy getting to learn more and more about God throughout our whole lives.

PRAYER:

Creator God, you promise to be with us always. Sometimes it is hard to see you at work in our lives. Sometimes it is hard to feel your presence. Answer us when we call, O Lord. Restore our sight. Envelope us in your faithful love. Amen.²²

²² Written by Sarah Bentley Allred