

-- 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.

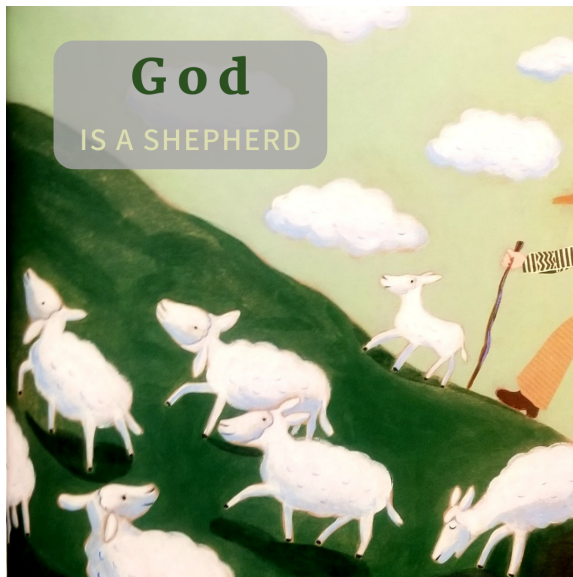
You can learn more about that Lent series at pictureadvent.weebly.com.

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DAY 29: GOD IS A SHEPHERD

MAR. 22



PSALM 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right
paths for his name's sake.
4 Even though I walk through the darkest
valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your
rod and your staff—they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies; you anoint my head
with oil; my cup overflows.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the
house of the Lord my whole life long.

A shepherd always walks near his
sheep to encourage them.

He counts them to make sure
that not a single one has strayed.

He takes them to graze
in the best grassy meadows
so that they will give the best milk.
Like a shepherd, God wants to lead us
where life is the best so that we can
give the best of ourselves.

REFLECTION:

Shepherds are a special image for God
because of how much meaning that role
means for God and for us, the sheep!
Shepherds guide us to what we need to thrive,
they keep watch for danger from outside, they
keep their eye on all the sheep of the flock
and go after any that wander astray, they
know their sheep well from what they look like
to their unique personalities. God is the
greatest and best Shepherd of the largest
flock, bringing us into God's house of
goodness and mercy all our lives.

PRAYER:

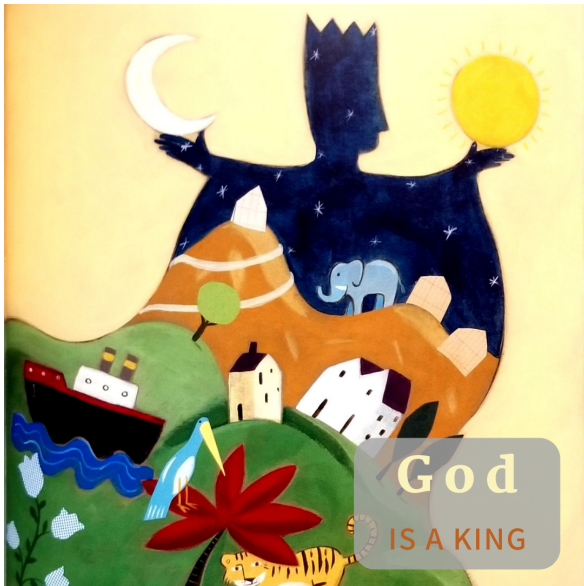
God of the sheep, the lost, the wandering...
I am sorry, God, that I don't always follow the path
you have set out for me. God, I search to feel
your love in the dark valleys of life. God, protect
all of your sheep as we try to love one another in
your image. God, help me take rest in the grassy
meadows and feel joy in the resting waters you
provide for me.

I breathe in the Creator. I breathe in the
Redeemer. I breathe in the Sustainer. Amen.²⁹

²⁹ Written by Kaci Boylan

DAY 30: GOD IS A KING

MAR. 23



PSALM 11

- 1 In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to me, "Flee like a bird to the mountains;
2 for look, the wicked bend the bow,
they have fitted their arrow to the string,
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.
3 If the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"
4 The Lord is in his holy temple;
the Lord's throne is in heaven.
His eyes behold, his gaze examines humankind.
5 The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked,
and his soul hates the lover of violence.
6 On the wicked he will rain coals of fire and sulfur;
a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
7 For the Lord is righteous;
he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his face.

God is the greatest king of all.
He reigns over the world for eternity.
He is the most magnificent king,
dressed in the splendor of the
universe.

God is also the most hidden of kings
-- the most secret, the most silent.
He has entrusted the Earth to us,
and asks us to reign over it with
care, justice, and goodness.

REFLECTION:

When we think of Kings, there are some pretty questionable characters out there. Even (maybe especially) within the pages of our Bible. Kings and other political leaders have done a lot of good and a lot of bad throughout history. To hear God is a King, a very human role, though for much of history thought to be God-ordained, could feel like a bit of an oxymoron. That is why God is the best ideal of a King. The greatest King with the biggest Kingdom, the King with the most honor and glory, but also a King that doesn't feel the need to be ostentatious or over-controlling. God as King shares with us our free will and helps us to contribute to building the Kingdom.

PRAYER:

God, we give you thanks that you have given us life, neighbors, and hearts full of feeling. We confess that sometimes we take rules that were meant for good, and we hurt people with them instead. Give us the eyes to see people in pain, and give us the courage to do whatever we can to help them. Remind us that even people we don't know or like are our neighbors, and that you have given them to us, for us to love. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.³⁰

³⁰ Written by Laura Merrill

DAY 31: GOD IS A HEALER

MAR. 24



PSALM 7:9-11

9 O let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
but establish the righteous,
you who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous God.
10 God is my shield,
who saves the upright in heart.
11 God is a righteous judge,
and a God who has indignation every day.

PSALM 34:17-18

17 When the righteous cry out, the Lord listens;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;
he saves those whose spirits are crushed.

God sees what is good in us.
He also sees what is sick.
If we ask him, he will take care of us.
God helps us remove what is bad,
clean what is dirty,
and straighten what is twisted.
As a doctor heals our bodies,
God can heal our hearts.

REFLECTION:

As much as God is a powerful King, God is also a gentle healer. God is everyone's healer, no matter who, no matter what they need healed. God knows even better than us what needs healing or what needs to be restored to be our best selves. God doesn't force healing on us, though. We must accept God's offer and work with God to bring about that healing. Healing is important and is often hard work. Welcome God's help in that work, share the burden, and become healed beautifully.

PRAYER:

Read the prayer to yourself slowly and with deep breath between each line.

Holy and Gracious God,
You are God, and I am not
Yet you lead me to relief from cruelty,
from suffering, from fear, from doubt, from
faithlessness, from injustice.
For I cannot save myself without your grace.
Unveil the blessed image you have left on me
and empower me to live into your namesake.
In the name of the Christ, I pray. Amen.³¹

³¹ Written by Rev. Paul C Reissmann IV

DAY 32: GOD IS A FRIEND

MAR. 25



You can tell everything to a friend.
You can also be silent around a friend
and simply feel comfortable.
A friend finds the words to comfort
you
when you are sad,
and laughs with you when you are
happy.
A friend listens, encourages, and
understands.
God is like this -- like the best of
friends.

PSALM 25: 13-18

- 13 They will abide in prosperity,
and their children shall possess the land.
14 The friendship of the Lord is for those who
fear him,
and he makes his covenant known to them.
15 My eyes are ever toward the Lord,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
17 Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me out of my distress.
18 Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.

REFLECTION:

God may feel far away sometimes, but no matter if you feel God close or have seen God at work lately, God is always there to be our friend. As much as God is high and mighty, God is also our friend. As we do with our closest friends, we can share everything with God--the good, the bad, the ugly. As our closest friends should do, God always listens to all that is on our mind, encourages us to be all that we can be, and understands our every mistake. God is not unreachable, or emotionally distant from us; God is as reachable as our friends and welcomes our friendship in return.

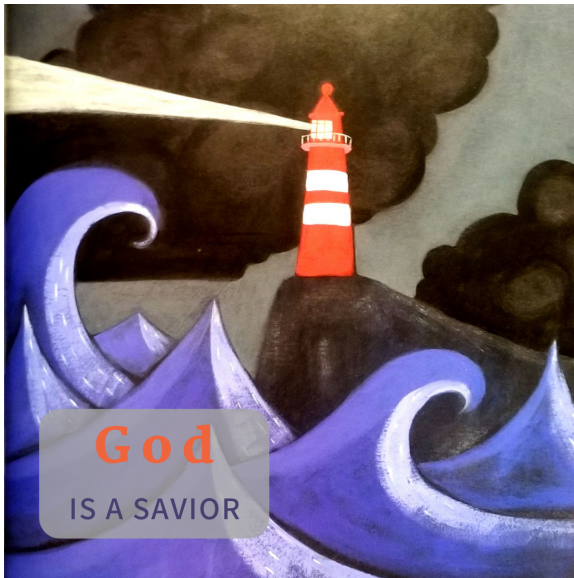
PRAYER:

God who hears us and desires to take us in, may we feel your loving presence now and always. When we feel afraid or lonely, give us the reassurance of your steadfast love. Amen.³²

³² Written by Scott Hughes

DAY 33: GOD IS A SAVIOR

MAR. 26



PSALM 5:1-4, 11-12

- 1 Give ear to my words, O Lord;
give heed to my sighing.
- 2 Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.
- 3 O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and
watch.
- 4 For you are not a God who delights in
wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.

- 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
so that those who love your name may exult
in you.
- 12 For you bless the righteous, O Lord;
you cover them with favor as with a shield.

When we are about to fall,
when we are sad or frightened,
we need someone to take our hand,
to comfort us and reassure us.
God wants to do that for us.
Sometimes this is difficult to believe.
But if there is still so much evil,
death, and grief in our world,
it is only because
God has not had the last word yet.

REFLECTION:

Though we often attribute this image to Jesus, that does not mean that God is not also Savior. God saves us from our brokenness. God saves us from our loneliness. God saves us from our sins and mistakes. God does not only save us as individuals, but God works to save our churches, our communities, our world, and bring us to better places of love, justice, peace, and harmony. As the illustration shows, when the sea is choppy, either inside of us or around us, God will always be our lighthouse, guiding us away from harm we can change course to avoid and shining a light to guide us back home, back to safety, back to relationship with God.

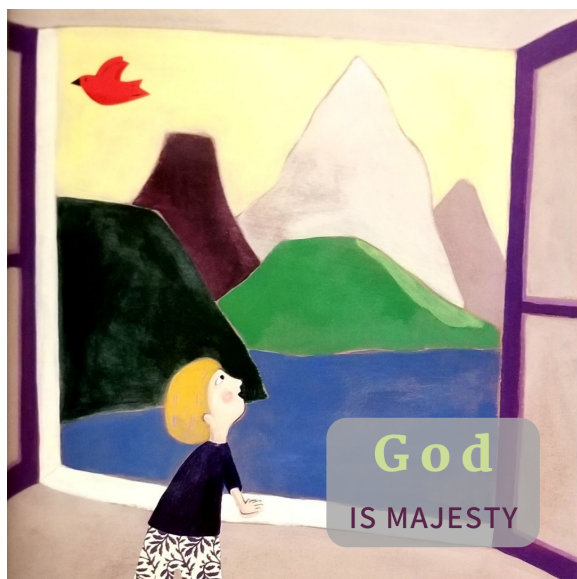
PRAYER:

Listening God who helps me when I need it most, thank you. I am grateful for my redemption and liberation, whether due to my own mistakes or the unjust actions of others. You are my help and my rescuer. Amen.³³

³³ Written by Laura Witkowski

DAY 34: GOD IS MAJESTY

MAR. 27



PSALM 8:1-4

1 O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your
foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your
fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have
established;
4 what are human beings that you are mindful
of them,
mortals that you care for them?

God is everywhere,
and he holds all things:
the Earth, the heavens,
and the creatures that live in them.
His glory is even grander than the
heavens.

When we try to imagine such
greatness,
it can be a little scary,
but we can also just be amazed.

REFLECTION:

God is in every part of creation, from the smallest seed to the highest mountain. God is bigger than we can imagine, is bigger than our knowledge can understand, bigger than human form, bigger than time itself. God is the epitome of majesty. Big, beautiful, all goodness and power. The majesty of God is often most easily seen in nature. In the beauty of new life, in the vastness looking out on a river valley or from the window of a plane, or in sounds of an interworking forest. As we approach warmer days of Spring, spend some time in nature connecting with God's majesty.

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for the sun and moon, stars and sky, and all the ways they bring us to wonder and awe, all the ways they reveal your glory. May our voices and lives join the silent "music of the spheres" to sing your praises--by day, and even in the night. Amen.³⁴

³⁴ Written by Paul L. Escamilla