

-- 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.

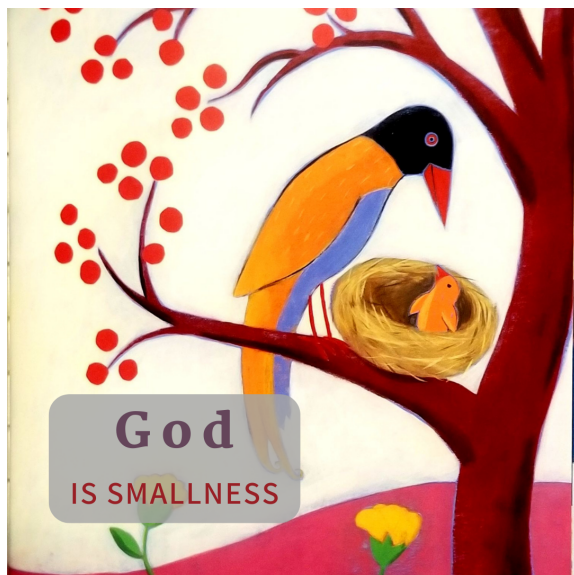
You can learn more about that Lent series at [pictureadvent.weebly.com](http://pictureadvent.weebly.com).

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## DAY 35: GOD IS SMALLNESS

MAR. 29



### PSALM 84:1-4

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.

3 Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,  
my King and my God.

4 Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise. Selah

We know that God is huge.  
And yet he also makes himself small.

He decided to live in our world,  
to be a baby who needs a mother,  
who has to learn to walk and talk.

God is a child  
that each one of us  
can carry in our arms.

### REFLECTION:

God is big and majestic and is above all things, but God is also in the small things too. In the tiniest babies to the buds on the trees. In the pollen that sticks to the back of a bee to the plankton in the sea. God can be found in all stages of the circle of life and all life around the world. The mark of God is in the beautiful way creation has grown in marvelous ways, down to the smallest pattern on a leaf. Not just in the living things, but we can also find God in the little details of our day and how things work out. When we don't see God all around us or it's hard to find God in the big things, look to the small things and the details to find God at work. For example, God is in the spark of light or joy in the midst of an awful day. Keep looking for God in the small things in the world.

### PRAYER:

Dear God, sometimes it's hard to see you in the spaces where the bound up are, where the hungry are, where the immigrants are, and where I am. Yet, you tell us this is where you are to be found. You beckon us to the places where the vulnerable gather. You call us to see each other with your loving eyes. May we do it. May we follow you where you lead us. May we be grateful for the call. Amen.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Written by Brittany Sky

## DAY 36: GOD HAS A FACE

MAR. 30



### PSALM 67:1-7

- 1 Let God grant us grace and bless us;  
let God make his face shine on us, Selah
- 2 so that your way becomes known on earth,  
so that your salvation becomes known  
among all the nations.
- 3 Let the people thank you, God!  
Let all the people thank you!
- 4 Let the people celebrate  
and shout with joy  
because you judge the nations fairly  
and guide all nations on the earth. Selah
- 5 Let the people thank you, God!  
Let all the people thank you!
- 6 The earth has yielded its harvest.  
God blesses us—our God blesses us!
- 7 Let God continue to bless us;  
let the far ends of the earth honor him.

No one has seen God.  
But Jesus came to us.  
He was born and grew up,  
living on Earth like all of us.  
Jesus told us that God is his father  
and our father.  
In Jesus, God took on a body and a  
face.  
Those who saw him and touched him  
have told us about him.

### REFLECTION:

Our God is bigger than the human form, bigger than the limits of a physical body, but our God also cares about us so much that God chose to experience what it is like to live as a human on earth. As John 3:16 so directly reminds us, God gave us God's only Son to live a full human life from birth to death. In Jesus, God became human and took on a face, took on a culture and skin color and bodily needs. No matter how much the artists paint or scientists do research, we cannot know exactly what Jesus's face, God's face, looked like. The important part is not about getting the exact details perfectly right, but to remember and emphasize that our God, the great and powerful and majestic, decided it was worth knowing what living our unique lives is like, what it is like to have a unique face and life on this earth.

### PRAYER:

Dear God, Thank you for asking us to know who you are. Forgive us when we forsake you for what the world says is important. Help us to love you more by loving our neighbor more. Thank you for Jesus. Amen.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Written by Kercida McClain



# DAY 37: GOD IS A PARENT

MAR. 31



A parent says to a child,  
"Come, I will show you the world!  
Come, I will teach you about life!"  
When the child has grown up, the  
parent says, "Go on -- it's up to you to  
make your own way!"  
The parent watches the child leave,  
happy and proud  
to see the child walk alone, free.  
But the parent still loves the child.  
Always!

## PSALM 22:9-11

9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.  
10 On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been  
my God.  
11 Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.

## PSALM 27:10-11

10 Even if my father and mother left me all  
alone,  
the Lord would take me in.  
11 Lord, teach me your way;  
because of my opponents, lead me on a  
good path.

## REFLECTION:

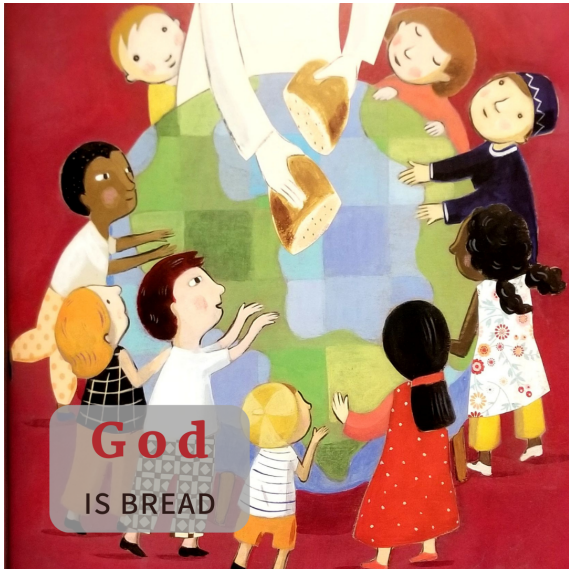
We are used to calling God, Father. So much so that it has become a bit routine for many of us. Some people that have abusive relationships with their fathers, have a hard time looking past their experience to see God as Father as good. Though the Bible and our Christian tradition refer to God as Father much more often, there are plenty of ways that God is described as Mother or with motherly traits. God is both and more than Father and Mother, God is the greatest and best Parent of all of us and to all of us. God may be King and Lord and Savior, but God is also caring Parent. A parent who hopes the best for us and guides us toward how to do better. A parent who encourages us to spread our wings and fly out of the nest, and who wipes our tears when we fail or get hurt. We can rely on God to be the best parent for all.

## PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you that you are always with us, no matter how we are feeling, whether we're happy or sad, or frightened or lonely. Thank you for hope. Amen.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Written by Glenys Nellist



## PSALM 63:5-8

5 I'm fully satisfied—  
as with a rich dinner.

My mouth speaks praise with joy on my  
lips—

6 whenever I ponder you on my bed,  
whenever I meditate on you  
in the middle of the night—

7 because you've been a help to me and  
I shout for joy in the protection of your  
wings.

8 My whole being clings to you;  
your strong hand upholds me.

We need to eat  
to live, to grow, and to be strong.  
Bread is a symbol of everything that  
gives life,  
of everything that nourishes the  
Earth's people.  
If we do not have anything to eat, we  
die.

God wants us to live.  
He has given us Jesus, and Jesus, in  
giving us the bread of his body, gives  
us never-ending life from God.

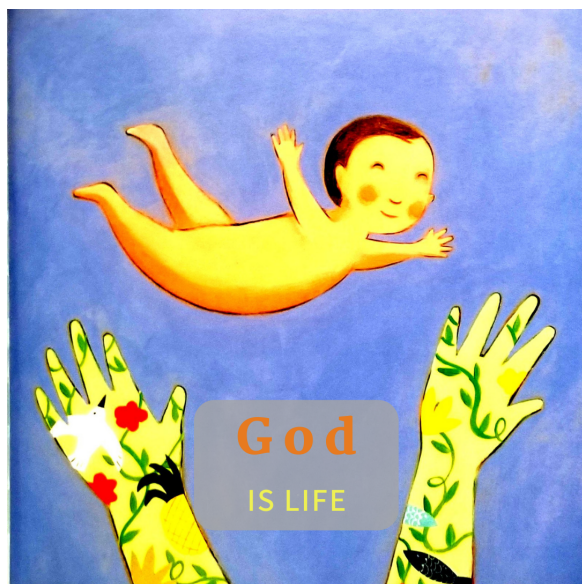
## REFLECTION:

Today, on Maundy Thursday, we remember the Last Supper, the final time that Jesus ate with his Disciples. During that passover gathering in that upper room, Jesus shared with his Disciples some rituals that we continue to practice today. Jesus took the wine and matza bread that had been there as part of honoring passover, and he shared it with them, telling them to remember him each time they partake in that meal. Jesus shared with his Disciples and all of us that special meal so that we can always remember Jesus as our bread, our daily bread like we pray in the Lord's prayer, our sustenance and fuel that keeps us going and growing and moving. Though Jesus is not with us in body on earth now, Jesus continues to be with us in all that nourishes us and sustains us.

## PRAYER:

Holy one,  
Revive us. Restore us.  
Make your face shine on us,  
so we can be saved.  
Amen.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Written by Linda Stephan



## PSALM 71:4-9

4 My God, rescue me from the power of the wicked;

rescue me from the grip of the wrongdoer and the oppressor

5 because you are my hope, Lord.

You, Lord, are the one I've trusted since childhood.

6 I've depended on you from birth—

you cut the cord when I came from my mother's womb.

My praise is always about you.

7 I've become an example to many people because you are my strong refuge.

8 My mouth is filled with your praise, glorifying you all day long.

9 Don't cast me off in old age.

Don't abandon me when my strength is used up!

We know how seeds sprout and grow to become plants and trees.

We know how a baby forms month-by-month in a mother's belly.

But the spark of life -- where does that come from?

That is the great mystery!

If God is the one who gives life, then God *is* life.

## REFLECTION:

At this point in the devotion, this image probably comes as no surprise. In some ways, this image is the culmination of many of the images we have already focused on. God is not only a bringer or sustainer of life, but is life itself. God as the source, creator, sustainer, redeemer, of life, God is life. God is in every breath we breathe, every drop of rain, every seed that sprouts, every baby's cry, and every gray hair that sprouts on our heads. God is in every first through last breath. God is in every piece of healing and restoration. God is in every step toward a world living out more love, justice, and peace. A world that is life-giving to all God's children instead of death dealing. Thanks be to God for the opportunities to live into God's abundant life while here on earth.

## PRAYER:

Holy God, we give you thanks for the earth's abundance which nourishes our bodies and your abundant love that strengthens our hearts. Help us to respond to your gifts with gratitude so that others might also experience your love and grace. Amen.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Written by Christine V. Hides

## DAY 40: GOD IS WITH US

## HOLY SATURDAY

APR. 3



### PSALM 71:14-19

14 But me? I will hope. Always.

I will add to all your praise.

15 My mouth will repeat your righteous acts  
and your saving deeds all day long.

I don't even know how many of those there  
are!

16 I will dwell on your mighty acts, my Lord.

Lord, I will help others remember nothing but  
your righteous deeds.

17 You've taught me since my youth, God,  
and I'm still proclaiming your wondrous  
deeds!

18 So, even in my old age with gray hair,  
don't abandon me, God!

Not until I tell generations about your mighty  
arm, tell all who are yet to come about your  
strength,

19 and about your ultimate righteousness, God,  
because you've done awesome things!

Who can compare to you, God?

This God of words and of silence,  
this God of light and of night,  
this God who is strength, Beauty,  
peace,

love, and forgiveness,  
this God who heals, who frees,  
and who saves - -

this God is the one we call "Our  
Father."

He is with us every day,  
until the day we will be with him.

### REFLECTION:

This image is perhaps the most important to remember of all of them, as this image is the cornerstone to the way we understand most of the other images. Our God is a God of love, life, wisdom, mercy, deliverance, and with a face, in those ways because God is with us. God is not some distant, detached figure in our lives. God is with us, even when we can't feel God. God is with us in the big and small things. God is with us in the highs and lows. God is with us as our fortress and our healer. God is with us to comfort and support us but also to guide us and help us grow toward living more holy lives. God does not create us and leave us to figure it out on our own. God is with us all along the way.

### PRAYER:

Loving good and wise God, sometimes I do not understand why things happen. Life is sometimes troubling and seems unfair. We live in a world where we need your face to shine upon us, so that we can see all is not lost, all is not dark, and all is not troubling. Help me to see a reflection of your goodness and love in all things. Amen.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Written by Kevin Johnson