

BLUEPRINT

2 SEASONAL
GUIDE

PENTECOST

MAY - JULY 2018

THE CHURCH'S LITURGICAL CYCLE

“The church year has seasons of darkness, of light, of sorrow, of rejoicing, of just getting through. Our lives have such seasons too. By incorporating these experiences, the church year hallows them, reminding us that all time is sacred because God is present in it.”

- Kimberlee Conway Ireton, The Circle of
Seasons: Meeting God in the Church Year

Kimberlee Conway Ireton speaks of the cyclical, circular nature of the church year which provides us with repeated opportunities to live out various aspects of our faith and to see life through the lens of the Christ-story.

She says; “We can grow in, with and through the seasons of the church year. Some years those seasons will align with

what is happening in our lives. Other years, they will not. But the invitation to wait, prepare, repent, celebrate, receive and rejoice is always extended.”

The invitation for us is to opt into this new way of marking time. So this year, Blueprint is preparing seasonal guides to provoke and accompany us as we journey together.

PENTECOST

A SEASON OF LIFE

Our first Seasonal Guide for 2018 began with ten weeks exploring the season of Lent. Lent is a time of darkness and longing which follows Jesus' journey to the Cross. In contrast, this guide begins at Acts 2 with the coming of God's Spirit and the radical conversion of over 3,000 new believers.

Jesus said that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground it cannot multiply (John 12:24). Following Christ's death, the Holy Spirit is given and we see the exponential multiplication of the church. This guide begins by celebrating the coming of God's Spirit at Pentecost, and then moves into Ordinary Time.

The scriptures chosen from the Lectionary for this guide hold two profound challenges for us.

Firstly, we see the early Church and the disciples encounter the power of God's Spirit in a way they never have before. They are given gifts such as prophecy, they see incredible healings, and they become a people of deep commitment and love for one another. The Holy Spirit brings transformation and reconciliation everywhere they go.

This season challenges us to believe for the same transforming power of the Spirit to be at work in our lives.

To move beyond sceptical rationalism, and to dare to throw our hopes naively on the promises of Christ.

Secondly, this guide points us many times to the cost of following Christ. People leave their mothers and fathers to walk in the way of Jesus, they are frequently misunderstood, and they face continual threats to their lives and those of their friends.

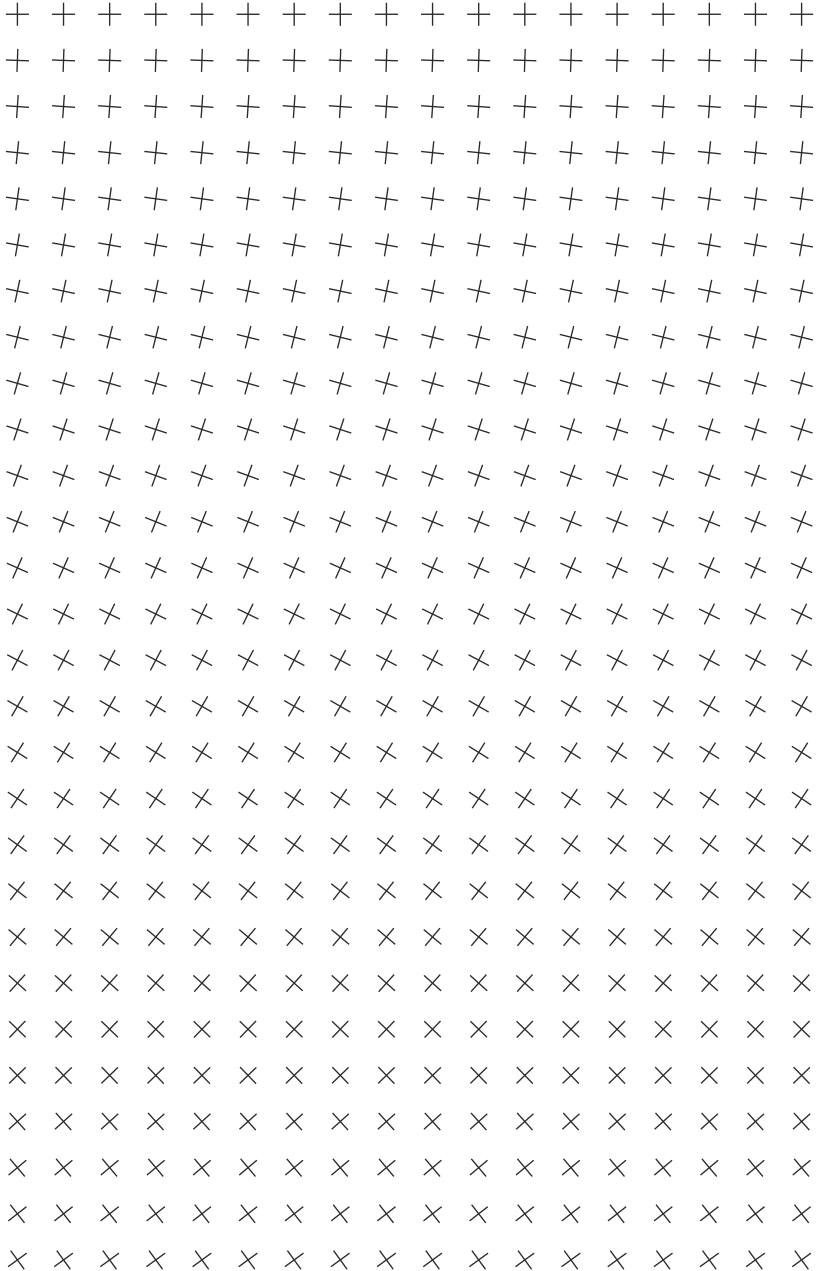
This season challenges us to look at what it is costing us to follow Jesus. Are we continuing to follow his challenging and revolutionary way, or have we got a little too comfortable? Alongside the questions

provided for each week, we suggest you may like to include the following in your discussions and reflection times:

- What is one question or challenge you feel God inviting you into this week?
- What tangible steps will you take to respond to this?

It is our hope that as you journey into this second Seasonal Guide you will find God's Spirit powerfully at work in you and your small groups, and that you will hear him calling you again to die to some things in order that life might come abundantly to our community and our neighbourhoods.

Aroha mai, aroha atu
Love is received, love is given



Coming of The Spirit

It comes as the wind,
screaming with only a whisper;
a quiet rage stirring the uncertain
in every searching soul.

It lingers in the familiar,
and in the breath of a stranger;
its faceless shadow covers those faceless of humanity,
bestowing gifts upon and within.

It comes and shall remain with us
for as long as we invite the embrace;
making its home on our tongues,
and in our bones.

Amy Creerar

20 MAY

WEEK ONE

TONGUES OF FIRE

ACTS 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.” Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

*“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.’*



Before Jesus ascended, he said he would leave an advocate (or helper) - the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). In this passage the disciples were all together when the Spirit came in the form of violent wind and fire. The presence of the Holy Spirit results in two powerful changes in the people gathered.

Jews had gathered together from many places with different languages and dialects. When the Spirit came they were miraculously able to understand

one another. In contrast to this you might remember the attempts of Babel to build a tower which would reach to God (Gen 11). The result of this was that all the languages were fragmented and they could no longer understand one another. The efforts of humanity to become god result in division, but the work of the Spirit creates unity between strangers.

Secondly, Peter stands up and declares the words of the prophet Joel. He says that the Spirit will

bring prophesy, visions, dreams and salvation. We hear an expansion of this in Romans 12 and 1Corinthians 12, saying the Spirit also brings physical

healing, miracles and the gift of tongues. The Holy Spirit equips us with both supernatural and natural gifts to carry out Christ's ministry of reconciliation.

RESPONSE

- 01** What has been your experience of the Holy Spirit?
Where do you see the Spirit at work in your life?

- 02** What is your experience of the gifts of the Spirit?
Do you have them and use them?

- 03** Is there someone you can ask to pray for you now or later this week to better experience and understand the role of the Holy Spirit in your faith?

27 MAY

WEEK TWO

BORN OF THE SPIRIT

JOHN 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.



Nicodemus was a super intelligent and pious religious official. Few others would know the scriptures as well as he did, yet he can't help but wonder if this miracle-worker might be onto something.

He comes under the cover of darkness where his colleagues wouldn't see him talking with this heretic named Jesus. He is seeking God and wonders if Jesus might know how to find him.

Jesus' response is strange. "You need to be born again." Nicodemus goes back to what he knows, his intellect, saying that it is absurd to think that one could

crawl back into their mother's womb. Jesus responds that he's going to need to think about this a different way from the ways he has thought about God before: "Flesh gives birth to Flesh, Spirit gives birth to Spirit" (John 3:6). In other words: what you know already won't serve you on this new journey.

Perhaps this is why Jesus says in Matthew 18:3 that "unless you change and become like a child you will never enter the kingdom of God." To follow Jesus is a continual process of submitting what we think we know to the often dumbfounding, naive and reckless way of God's Kingdom.

RESPONSE

- 01** Despite his religious education, Nicodemus needed to re-learn to follow God. What ideas about God might you need to put aside to truly follow God?

- 02** We are called to the vulnerable space of becoming like children: to listen naively and dependently to Jesus. When was the last time you felt out of your depth and like you had to start again?

3 JUNE

WEEK THREE

RECONCILIATION

—— 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-19 ——

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.



The old had gone, the new is come. Whatever once stood between us and God - shame, guilt, fear, sin - need no longer have power in our lives. Through Jesus, our past and our future lives are no longer held against us. Instead we are “hidden in Christ” (Col 3:3)

But this is not just for us. We are invited into the ministry of reconciliation: to be agents of redemption throughout the earth. So Paul implores us not to see one another as if Christ hasn’t reconciled us; we must show the same grace to others that God has shown to us. If we are free, then Christ has made all free.

We are not, like the world, compelled to action by fear, insecurity or pain. This passage begins by saying that it is Christ’s love that compels us. So in everything, we are motivated by love. Love that doesn’t see others in their unredeemed state, but as Christ sees them.

The ministry of reconciliation we are called to is to see God within the other and to call out the best in all creation: To forgive as Christ has forgiven us, to love as he has loved us, to restore the world as he has restored us.

RESPONSE

01 What does the ministry of reconciliation look like in your life? Where are you actively and intentionally offering reconciliation to those around you?

02 We are to be compelled by love. What is it in your life that compels and motivates you currently?

10 JUNE

WEEK FOUR

MOTHERS & BROTHERS

MARK 3:20-35

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house.

Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”



The reckless way of Jesus calls us to a life that is often misunderstood by those who love us.

In this passage Jesus' family arrive at a house where he and the disciples are staying. Convinced that Jesus has lost his mind, they are determined to bring him home again. It should be welcome news to many of us that even Jesus' family sometimes wondered if he was taking this whole thing too far.

Unable to enter the house, Jesus' family send someone inside who tells him "your mother and brothers are here." Jesus response seems harsh: "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Our belonging in Christ is our ultimate home. Paul tells us we have been "adopted into God's family." (Eph 1:5)

Our belonging to and in Christ is meant to supersede our allegiance to our workplace, to our friends, to our culture, and even to our families. It is his opinion that matters above all others, and his kingdom which must be the dominant reality through which we see the world.

The story of the scriptures begins with God's blessing to a tribe, then to a people, then to a nation, and finally, to the entire world. God's arms are always widening to say that "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

RESPONSE

01 Where has your belonging in Christ created misunderstanding with friends, family or colleagues?

02 What opinions do you currently hold above your belong in Christ's family? Who might you need to disappoint to be faithful to Jesus?

17 JUNE

WEEK FIVE

MUSTARD SEEDS

MARK 4:26-34

He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything



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On the sea of Galilee, Jesus stands in a boat speaking to the multitudes. They have travelled long distances, some journeying several days, to hear his voice. They are exhausted and weary, hungry for food and for hope.

His words flow across the water, filled with faith and certainty. The Kingdom of God, he explains, grows in a way that cannot be seen. It is mysterious, gradual and subversive. Whether the man sleeps or gets up, the seed grows its own way. Even the size of the seed does not matter: a tiny mustard seed shall become the largest of plants.

The seeds we sow with God do not grow by our knowledge or increase with our labour. Trusting God with our lives, dreams, hopes and fears is scary. Yet God holds our seeds of hope. He sees our fears, knows our frustrations, hears our pain and wears them on his head as a crown of thorns.

Things may grow differently to how we expect, they may be slower than we want them to be, but wait and see. Our seeds grow in the palms of the one who laid down his fear, frustration and pain for us. Growth is certain when we wait on him.

RESPONSE

01 What about this parable strikes you as curious?

02 How does it feel to know that Spirit-led change and transformation can't be hurried, that this is an act of waiting for something to grow within you?

24 JUNE

WEEK SIX

NEITHER JEW
NOR GENTILE

———— GALATIANS 3:23-29 ————

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.



In Chapter three of Galatians we see Paul explaining to Gentile converts-to-Christ about how the old promises made to Abraham, and the old ways of the law, have been fulfilled in Christ.

These people were being told they needed to jump through the hoops of the law in order to be accepted by God, but Paul's letter declares that it's through Christ that they are accepted as children of God.

Paul refers to the law as a temporary 'guardian', translated from *paidagōgos*, effectively a babysitter used by wealthy Greek and Roman families for the care and discipline of a child.

The metaphor Paul uses suggests that the authority of

the law was only for a time, only until Christ came and took control of the household. Christ changes everything - no longer do the hoops need to be jumped through to be acceptable to God, those who believe are declared to be children of God.

This identity as a child of God becomes the first and last word about them. Now, all other ways people can be categorised or divided fall away - all are set with equal standing as children before their God.

Through baptism into Christ, we too belong to him and to one another and share fully and equally in the inheritance of God's promises and in the mission to which God has called us.

RESPONSE

01 How does being a child of God affect you when life is going well, and when it is not?

02 How would it look for you to allow your identity in Christ to take place above all other things that inform your identity?

03 How might this affect how you value yourself and others? How would God call you to remember your identity as his child this week?

1 JULY

WEEK SEVEN

CORNER OF A CLOAK

MARK 5:21-43

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”

So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

In the Ancient Near East culture, the corner of a man's garment represented his identity; it was a symbol of who he was and what he stood for.

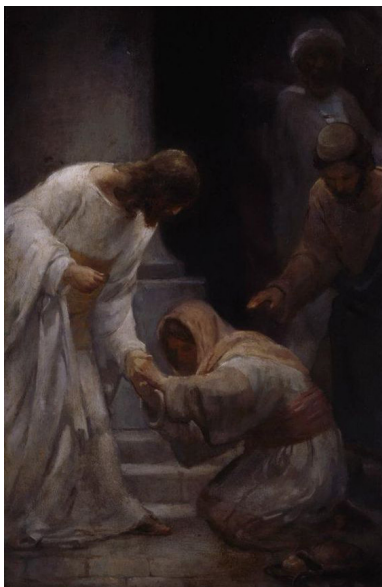
In the last book of the Old Testament a prophecy was given of the Messiah that references the corners of his garment: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2 KJV, where the same word means both "wings" and "corners of a garment").

Malachi prophecies that central to the Messiah's identity would be spiritual and physical healing for all who trusted him.

In this reading we see two people reaching desperately for Jesus. A man of honour, and a woman who was dishonoured, considered ritually unclean, because of her physical health. One was a man of stature and position in society, the other

bankrupt and shunned.

Both approach Jesus with humility, with a hunger for healing and as their final source of hope. Seeing their intentions and their faith, Jesus does not embarrass or disown either of them. They both reached out, in the case of the woman, physically, to show they wanted to identify with Jesus, to trust him with their most raw needs.



RESPONSE

01 Take some time to consider the point of view from each of these characters. What stands out to you?

02 How does this scripture challenge you? How does it comfort you? Note one need you have this week, and imagine approaching Jesus with it, as Jairus and the woman did.

8 JULY

WEEK EIGHT

A PROPHET
WITHOUT HONOUR

MARK 6:1-13

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.



Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Repeatedly throughout Scripture we see a mismatch between heavenly and worldly metrics of worth.

Again and again, God seems to value and use those things that we naturally overlook. We see this in the example of Israel, in the Old Testament prophets, and in the people Jesus chose to spend his time with. This is the mustard-seed kingdom, where one kid's lunch is more than enough to feed 5000 hungry people.

When Jesus returned to Nazareth, the people there saw the boy that they remembered. In this small town, he was known to everyone by name. They knew his family. They knew that he was just a carpenter; useful to have around when your

door is sticking, but an unlikely source for Rabbinic wisdom. What could he possibly have to offer? This was the metric they chose to judge him by, and so they missed out. Here was God, become man, walking among them, but all they wanted was the man.

Then we have the example of the disciples. Elsewhere we read of their mundane backgrounds. Twelve ordinary men from different walks of life, equipped with nothing but their clothes and a walking stick.

Yet it was not what they lacked that would define them. God saw potential. The twelve evangelised, healed, and cast out demons. God's work through them would become the foundation of the Church.

RESPONSE

- 01** What are some other examples from Scripture of God using things or people that the world does not place a high value on?

- 02** The Nazarenes assumed that as a carpenter, Jesus couldn't be wise or a vessel of God's power. What is a time in your life when you or someone you know has been written-off because of reasons that shouldn't matter?

- 03** What is one person or situation in your life at the moment where you might ask God to help you see things in a different way?

15 JULY

WEEK NINE

MARKED BY GRACE

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.



This passage is the opening of Paul's letter to the church of Ephesus, and it is thought that Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote it.

Ephesus was a busy port city like Wellington, and the majority of the church were Gentiles, not Jewish converts to Christianity. As the early church struggled to reconcile their different backgrounds, cultures and heritage, Paul calls to them to be united in Christ, who came 'to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth', and to see that they all have equal standing before God in Christ.

Paul doesn't ignore the very different backgrounds Jews and Gentiles have come from

to knowing Christ. Instead, he acknowledges that the Jewish people have known about and sought to follow Yahweh for a long time.

Paul acknowledges that God had been at work revealing himself through that people, but now, in Christ, the doors have been flung open - all peoples and cultures are now invited and included receive the inheritance as children of God.

This is the central point around which unity can be found. Paul reminds the many and varied people who made up the church in Ephesus that all peoples and cultures are invited to faith in Christ, to receive the Holy Spirit and to live and dwell in him.

RESPONSE

01 In this verse, Paul reminds the people that they have been saved by grace, which is a gift from God. Can you recall an experience you've had of God's grace or encountering the Holy Spirit?

02 Paul reminds the Ephesians that they are all united in Christ. Is there some disunity that you are experiencing either with a particular person, or with God? How would God call you to pursue unity through Christ this week?

22 JULY

WEEK TEN

MARY MAGDALENE

JOHN 20:1-2

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

JOHN 20:11-18

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

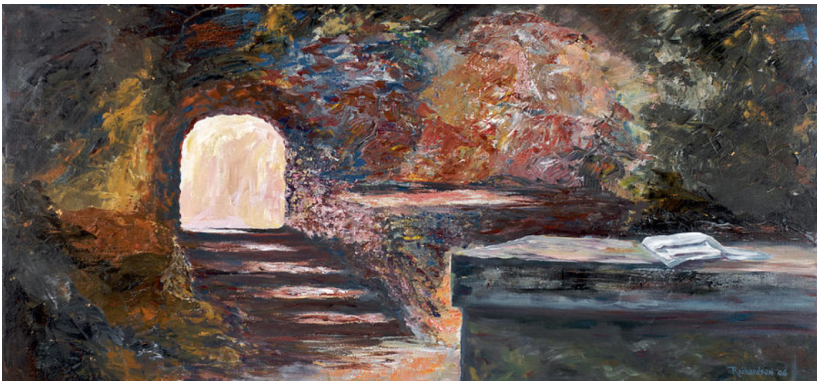
He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.



Mary is heartbroken. So distraught that, even when Christ appears alongside her, she doesn't recognise him. The one who was meant to save and liberate her people is now dead, and to add salt to the wound, she now can't even grieve that loss by tending to the body.

When Christ appears to her we can infer that she joyously embraces him. Jesus' response? "Do not hold onto me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father." In others words, "please don't get too excited that I'm back, there is more to come." Jesus, who just came back from the dead, is soon to leave again.

Sometimes our greatest barrier to where God is next leading us next is our current idea about

God. Often God brings us into an opportunity or a season specifically so we may grow in faith and relationship with him for a time, but he also bids us "Don't hold on too tight, there is more to come." We are to stay close to him, but to hold gently to the ways in which we express our current relationship with him.

John's ministry of repentance gave way to Christ's ministry of forgiveness, which gave way to his death, which gave way to his resurrection, which gave way to his ascension, which gave way to his Holy Spirit: All movements of God that looked profoundly different.

We must not hold on too tightly to this present moment, lest we miss the new thing God is doing.

