



## **GPS GUIDE Grow, Pray, Serve Guide for Weekly Reflection**

(adapted from United Methodist Church of the Resurrection resources: sharechurch.com)

**November 3, 2024 *Malice Towards None, Charity for All***

**Psalm 46:1-2, 6-7 (NRSV), John 14:27 (CEB), Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)**

**“Do not be afraid”**

### **MONDAY 11.4.24 John 14:25-27**

Tomorrow is Election Day in the United States. Feel any anxiety? John wrote that just before Jesus' faced the cross, “When Judas took the bread, he left immediately. And **it was night**” (John 13:30). But even that darkness didn't conquer Jesus (the light of the world—[John 8:12](#)). Evil people plotted, only faith could see Easter's light, but Jesus gave his followers the parting gift of his peace. It grew from the Holy Spirit's eternal presence with them. If held firmly, it alone offered Jesus' peace even at times of great fear.

Scholar William Barclay wrote, “The peace which the world offers us is the peace of escape, the peace which comes from the avoidance of trouble and from refusing to face things. The peace which Jesus offers us is the peace of conquest. No experience of life can ever take it from us and no sorrow, no danger, no suffering can ever make it less. It is independent of outward circumstances.” \* What makes the peace Jesus gives “independent of outward circumstances”?

- The “fight or flight” response to danger seems to be hard-wired into our brains.

Do you believe Jesus promised to wipe that out? Or was his promise that trust in his presence gives us a better way to face whatever triggers it? Are there dark places of fear and anxiety in your life today? How can Jesus' loving promise free your heart and mind to live in the peace he came to give you?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me a peace that isn't temporary, that nothing can take away from me. Please help me to live into that peace no matter what life brings. Amen.

\* William Barclay, Daily Study Bible Series: *The Gospel of John—Volume 2, Chapters 8–21*, (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 171.

## The ultimate winner, beyond any election

### TUESDAY 11.5.24 Revelation 11:15-17, 17:5-9, 14; 18:2

Think today's political climate is scary? Imagine living in the first-century Roman Empire, a reign of terror that called its emperor divine. Yet John boldly said God, **not** Caesar, was "Lord of Lords and King of kings." "It is easy for modern readers to miss John's audacity: banished... he recounts a funeral dirge over the most powerful empire the Mediterranean world had ever known. Rome was close to the height of its power; the church was growing but may have constituted less than 0.1% of the empire's population." \*

• The apostle Paul said Christians can live differently from those "who don't have any hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The Bible's last book radiated hope. Rome scorned Christians, often killed them, and exiled Revelation's visionary writer. Yet John confidently wrote about the Lamb's final victory. John's vision took the promise of eternal life from "just words" into potent, mind-stretching images. How can his audacious confidence give you courage no matter what happens on earth?

• "The basis for the Lamb's victory in 17:14 is that 'he is Lord of lords and King of kings'.... the Babylonian king [in Daniel 4] was addressed by this title, so the king of latter-day Babylon (Rome) in John's day was similarly addressed.... The Lamb exposes as false the divine claims of the emperor and others like him." \*\* Do you trust that Jesus is "king of kings" over any human ruler? Can you trust him as "our place of safety" ([Psalm 46:11](#))?

**Prayer:** Jesus, under the nose of Roman emperors who claimed to be divine, John and the first Christians said you are truly Lord. I join in their allegiance to you and in their life-changing hope. Amen.

\* NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 11188). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

\*\* G. K Beale and D. K. Carson, ed. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007, p. 1139.

## "Don't be anxious about anything"

### WEDNESDAY 11.6.24 Philippians 4:4-7

As we write this, it's possible that we will not know yet on this November 6 morning who won the election. Even if we do, it's likely that about half of the voters will be upset. "This could sound like empty sentimentality if not for the fact that Paul is writing from prison.... When we bring the things that cause us stress into prayer, we put ourselves and our troubles inside a much bigger picture: the story of God's love for us in Jesus Christ, a love that is stronger than **anything** that can hurt us or those we love." \* • Paul wrote that God's peace "exceeds all understanding." You may ask, "How can I be at peace when \_\_\_\_\_ has happened?" Here's how: "Paul... emphasizes an active dependence on the benevolent God who hears our cries and takes care of us, if not always the way we expect, always in love." \*\* How can you put yourself and your worries, real as they are, inside that bigger

picture of God's love for you in Jesus Christ, stronger than anything that can hurt you or those you love?

- Do you ever wish Paul had said, "Bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks—and God will make sure they come out just the way you want"? What made the apostle, in a dungeon not sure if he was facing execution, value the gift of God's peace more even than a "not guilty" verdict and freedom? How can bringing up all of your requests to God open you to receive the peace of God that exceeds all understanding?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for living your life on this earth, even when it led to a cross, inside the much bigger picture of God's love. Teach me every day how to put my trust in your peace and love that exceeds all understanding. Amen.

\* Cynthia M. Campbell, sidebar article "Stress" in *The CEB Women's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016, p. 1492. \*\* NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (pp. 10400-10401). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

## Jesus' "closing campaign argument"

### THURSDAY 11.7.24 Matthew 5:43-48, 7:7-12

Resurrection based the "Do Unto Others" campaign on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (which was not a one-time event, but a summary of the way he regularly taught about God's Kingdom—cf. [Luke 6:27-36](#)). Jesus expanded the meaning of loving your neighbor in ways that must have sounded, and may still sound, radical. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Agape is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return." \*

- Dr. King went on in that sermon: "This is what Jesus meant when he said, 'Love your enemies.' .... I've seen too much hate to want to hate, myself... every time I see it, I say to myself, hate is too great a burden to bear." \* Do Jesus' words and example inspire you to embrace Jesus' kind of radically self-giving love? In our polarized society, how can love actively help to dismantle the "us vs. them" mentality and build bridges, even with personal, social, or political "enemies"?
- Jesus said loving your enemies makes you more like God, who "makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous." How can you grow the kind of character and maturity it takes to love your enemies? Did Jesus mainly mean altering your emotions to **feel** more loving toward them, or altering your behavior to **act** for their good? How can you become more like God in your willingness to act for the good of all?

**Prayer:** God, grant me the strength to trust that love is a powerful force against the evil of division. Guide me to actively build bridges, challenge personal prejudices, and confront injustices with a living faith that transforms my heart. Amen.

\* "A Christmas Sermon on Peace," in James M. Washington, ed. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1986, p. 256.

## Live in the light of love

### FRIDAY 11.8.24 Ephesians 5:2, 8-16

It's a physical fact that people who want to do something they are ashamed to have others see them doing choose to do those deeds in darkness if they possibly can. The spiritual contrast of "darkness" with "light" is rooted in that typical human reaction to the presence or absence of physical light.

Ephesians was confident that Christ followers, living in God's grace and power, could live out Isaiah 60's glowing words: "Arise! Shine! Your light has come; the LORD's glory has shone upon you." •

Verse 8 did not say, as we might expect, something like "You belong to the light." It used a stronger phrase: "Now you **are** light in the Lord. Live as children of light." "It is the Christian's duty to expose every action, every decision, every motive to the light of Christ." \* Who is the source of the light that shines from your life in your best moments? Can you recall one or more times when you realized Christ's light shining through you had brightened another life?

- What are some attitudes or behaviors (even if you've always been a Christian) in which God has moved your life from darkness to light? How can you intentionally "test" the parts of your life, as verse 10 suggested, to discern the way of living most pleasing to God? How can you trust God's leading, above and beyond the instincts or wisdom of human culture, to shape your life into a life glowing with the light of God's love?

**Prayer:** God, creator of light, keep illuminating the darkest corners of my life. Keep guiding me as I test habits and practices, seeking to live every day as a child of your light. Amen.

\* William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 165.

## Jesus didn't come to judge, but to save

### SATURDAY 11.9.24 John 3:14-21

Too often, John 3:16 is read as a stand-alone verse, the only one some people (even those who love the Bible) are aware of. In fact, when the apostle John wrote those words, he didn't even think of them as "chapter 3, verse 16." \* What we now call verses 17-19, and too often overlook, were for John simply a logical set of ideas that flowed from the great truth in verse 16 that verses 14-15 built up to. As we end a sermon series supporting the "Do Unto Others" campaign, it is important to see that in that phrase Jesus expressed not some general idea about being "nice," but rather laid out the entire central purpose of his life of ministry, his death on the cross and his defeat of death in the resurrection. Jesus did not come to judge and condemn people; he came as the light of the world to

save. John said the only basis for judgment is that the light was right there, and some people turned their backs on it and chose darkness.

- “Do Unto Others” does not end when campaign signs are put away. It is the heart of all that Jesus came to do. “Evil lurks deep within each of us. For healing to take place we must ourselves be involved in the process. This doesn’t mean that we just have to try a lot harder to be good.... All we can do, just as it was all the Israelites could do, is to look and trust: to look at Jesus, to see in him the full display of God’s saving love, and to trust in him. Here there opens up the great divide, which John describes in terms of darkness and light (see [John 1:4–5](#)). Believing in Jesus means coming to the light, the light of God’s new creation.... The darkness (and those who embrace it) must be condemned, not because it offends against some arbitrary laws which God made up for the fun of it.... It must be condemned because evil is destroying and defacing the present world and preventing people coming forward into God’s new world.” How can you, like Jesus, live to save rather than condemn by remembering to “Do Unto Others”?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you came to offer all of us, with all our differences, the gift of eternal life. I accept and trust your gift. And because of your gift, I wish to live as you lived, seeking to move beyond any divisions and resentments and to treat all people with your grace. Amen.

\* Chapter divisions were not in any printed Bible until the year 1382, verse divisions not until 1551. You can read the fascinating story at <https://www.biblegateway.com/learn/bible-101/bible-verses-and-chapters/>. \*\* Wright, N. T., *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 33). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.