

Dwelling

In the

Word

for the

Northern Great Lakes Synod

September 2023 – August 2024



You are invited to **join the Synod Council** as we dwell in the word,
via zoom, the first Thursday of every month,
starting Thursday September 7 at 6:30pm CT/ 7:30pm ET.
The zoom link will be available on our website and E-notes.

Abide in me as I abide in you.
Just as the branch
cannot bear fruit by itself
unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you
unless you abide in me.

~John 15.4

Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

In early December of 2017, I was out in our front yard wrapping Christmas lights around a limb of a tree. The limb was about 10 feet off the ground, and I was standing on a ladder, perhaps the third step down, in order to stretch the lights over and under the branch that extended horizontally. Finished with that particular section, I took one step down, but instead of the ladder remaining firmly stationary, it moved toward me. If I did nothing, I would fall to the ground from a painful height on my back. So I grabbed the limb of the tree and pulled toward it, thinking that this would stabilize the ladder and bring us both back upright.

No such luck. Instead of righting itself, the ladder fell away beneath me leaving me to cling briefly to the limb before falling to the ground. In my mind, in that slow motion moment, I felt like I could actually choose where I fell, like a kind of gymnastic dismount from the uneven bars. But in reality, I dropped like a bag of potatoes. And somewhere in the confusion of lights, ladder, and branch, the two fingers of my right hand were caught and pulled out, down, and around with a distinctive crunching sound that made me think of someone snacking on a mouthful of potato chips.

I had broken the bone in my hand that was connected to the ring finger and disrupted the surrounding bones and soft tissue. After several weeks in a splint and then cast, I was given my

hand back, only to realize that in that brief time, my brain had decided that my hand no longer belonged to my body. It was still attached of course, but not in a way that gave it life and function. The physical therapist called it Chronic Reactive Pain Disorder. In short, my hand could no longer work as a hand should. I could not write or type, play piano or grab hold of things. It was a swollen useless thing. My brain, and my hand, needed to be retrained and reconnected to meaningful communication with the body, so that the brain would tell the body to send healing and reconnect the signals to the muscles of my hand.

So what about meaningful connection in the body...the BODY...of Christ? What needs to be retrained? What needs to re-awakened for life and increased function as we are Church together?



My hand was brought back to life as I watched the 2018 Winter Olympics. While watching gymnasts who actually knew how to land a dismount, I put my hand in hot water for two minutes and then in ice water for 30 seconds – back and forth, night after night. Then exercises, and physical therapy, and more tricks on the brain to get my hand to function in a way that was useful to the body.

Jesus, thankfully, does not suggest that we all dunk ourselves in tubs of hot and cold water to be reconnected as a body. Rather, Jesus talks about connectedness as abiding in him in order to bear fruit. And the way that we abide is by being in relationship with him. And that relationship is conveyed to us in at least two ways: through study of scripture and through relationship with each other as the body of Christ. Again....BODY.

When the Synod Council met in retreat on June 9 - 10, we agreed to initiate an effort for us to abide, as a whole Synod, as 79 congregations spanning hundreds of miles and in a variety of communities and contexts, by dwelling on the same passages of scripture over a 12-month period.

We will abide with Jesus by dwelling in the Word. And in abiding, in dwelling with the presence of Christ in the word, and considering the work of the Spirit with each other, we will connect with the one who makes us one, who gathers us as a BODY to embody the love of Christ in the world and for the world.

The impact of being disconnected, of having the body forget who it is connected to and why,

cannot be overestimated. We need each other to be the body of Christ, and we need the Holy Spirit of Christ to clarify our mission and purpose as that Body. By dwelling in the word together, we shall abide...in Christ, in the Word, in the presence of Christ in each other.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan

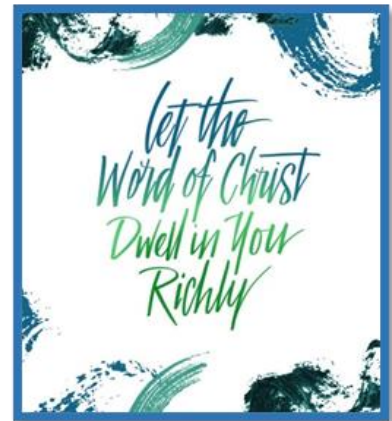
Welcome to the Dwelling in the Word Initiative of the Northern Great Lakes Synod!

Twelve different passages follow—one for every month. Please use these texts each month to begin your congregational council meetings and quilter groups, your Sunday School and youth group meetings, and each and every gathering of your church. As you Dwell in the Word, you join people in every congregation from across the synod as they dwell in the same scripture text. Take turns leading, and use the same text for that month, even if you attend multiple meetings.

NO PREPARATION IS NEEDED! NO THEOLOGICAL DEGREEE REQUIRED!

How to Dwell in the Word:

1. Make copies of the page for the month for each participant, or invite them to access the pdf from the synod website.
2. The leader prays a simple prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to be present.
 - a. For example: “Dear Lord, we call upon the Holy Spirit to be present among us as we hear and read and discuss God’s Word, Amen.”
3. Invite one person to read the text aloud.
4. Allow for a time of silent reflection.
5. Have a different person read the text again aloud.
6. Open the discussion to consider these questions:
 - a. What catches your attention?
 - b. What questions does this passage raise for you?
 - c. Where might God’s Spirit be nudging you through this passage?
7. The group concludes by praying as the Spirit moves, or the Lord’s Prayer.



Dwelling in the Word activity will likely take about 15 to 25 minutes.

Remember, this is not meant to be a formal Bible Study or someone giving a lecture. Allow and invite anyone and everyone to share. Avoid correcting what is shared. Be open to learning from the comments of others.

May our Synod be blessed as we listen to God through Dwelling in the Word!

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September

Matthew 5:1-16 "The Beatitudes"

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. **15** People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.



1. What catches your attention?

2. What questions does this passage raise for you?

3. Where might God's Spirit be nudging you in this passage?

October 2023

Ezekiel 37 - "Dry Bones"

37 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."



⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

1. What catches your attention?
2. What questions does this passage raise for you?
3. Where might God's Spirit be nudging you in this passage?

November 2023

Luke 16:1-13 “The Dishonest Steward”

16 Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ² So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ ³ Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ ⁵ So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ ⁷ Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ ⁸ And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly, for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone they may welcome you into the eternal homes.



¹⁰ “Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹ If, then, you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³ No slave can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

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2. What questions does this passage raise for you?
3. Where might God’s Spirit be nudging you in this passage?

December 2023

Acts 16:6-15 "Paul's Second Missionary Journey"



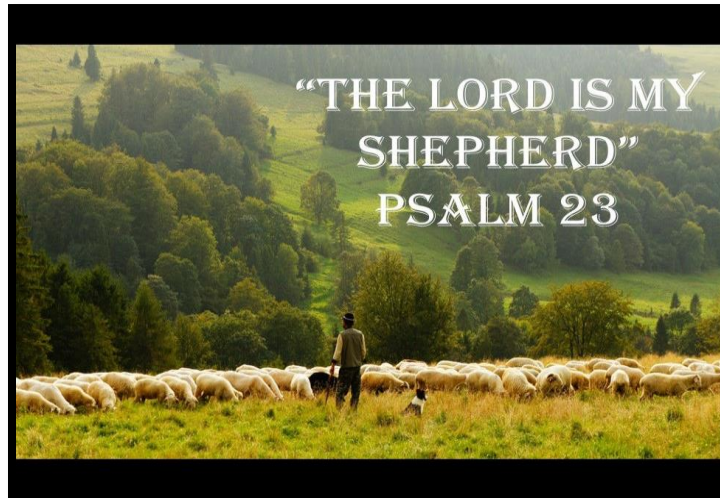
⁶ They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; ⁸ so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

¹¹ We therefore set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

1. What catches your attention?
2. What questions does this passage raise for you?
3. Where might God's Spirit be nudging you in this passage?

January 2024

Psalm 23 - "Shepherd's Psalm"



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.

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February 2024

Matthew 25:31-46 - "Judgment of the Nations"

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.' ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life."



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March 2024

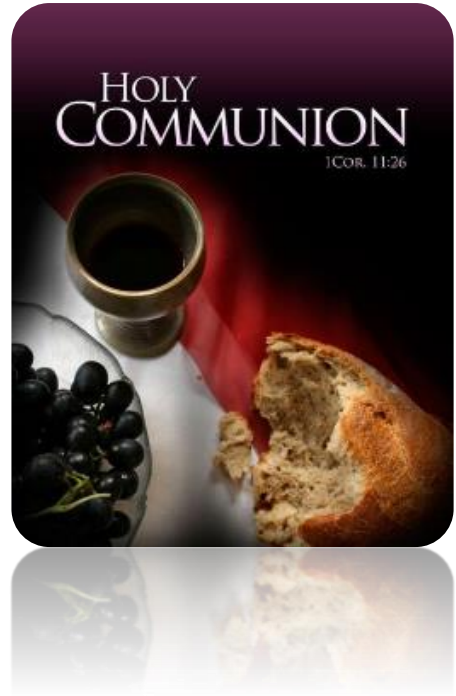
I Corinthians 11:17-33 - "Holy Communion"

¹⁷ Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹ Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. ²¹ For when the time comes to eat, each of you proceeds to eat your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²² What! Do you not have households to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For all who eat and drink without discerning the body eat and drink judgment against themselves. ³⁰ For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.



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April 2024

John 4:1-30 - "The Woman at the Well"

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" ² (although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized), ³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷ A

Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."

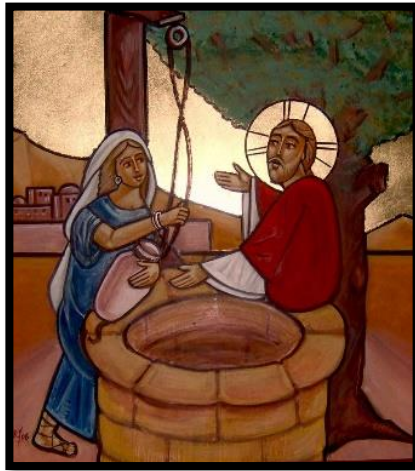
¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in

saying, 'I have no husband,' ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we

know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ).

"When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to

you." ²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

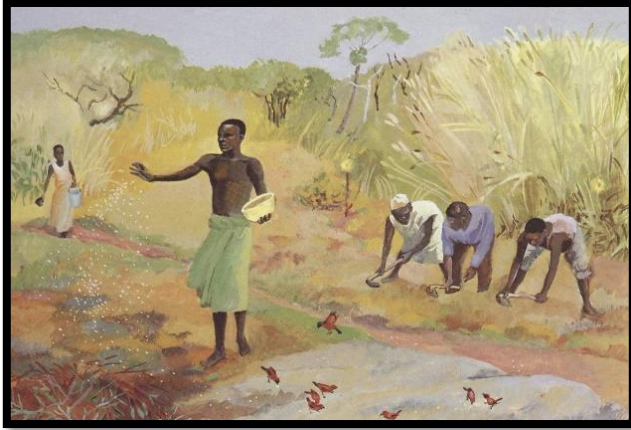


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May 2024

Luke 8: 4-15 "The Parable of the Sower"

⁴ When a large crowd was gathering, as people were coming to him from town after town, he said in a parable: ⁵ "A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed some fell on a path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on rock, and as it grew up it withered for lack of moisture. ⁷ Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸ Some fell into good



soil, and when it grew it produced a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "If you have ears to hear, then hear!" ⁹ Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but to others I speak in parables, so that

'looking they may not perceive
and hearing they may not understand.'

¹¹ "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² The ones on the path are those who

have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. ¹⁴ As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with endurance.

1. What catches your attention?
2. What questions does this passage raise for you?
3. Where might God's Spirit be nudging you in this passage?

June 2024

Psalm 121 - "Psalm of Ascent"



¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.
³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
⁴ He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day
nor the moon by night.
⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
⁸ The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

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July 2024

Acts 8:26-40 "Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch"

²⁶ Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." ³⁰ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³² Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth."

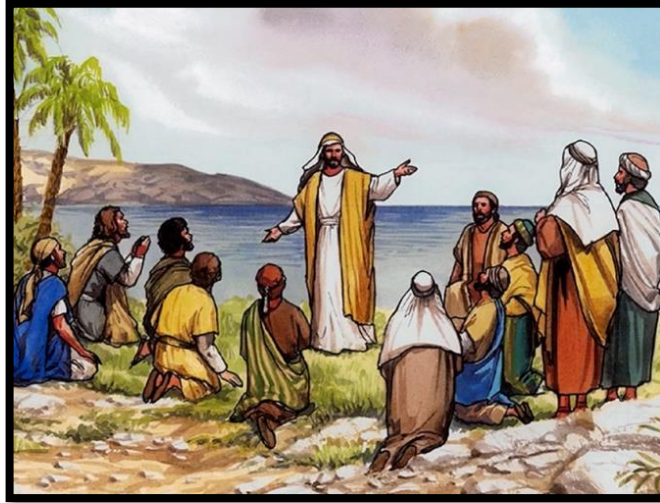


³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" ³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

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August 2024

Matthew 28:11-20 “The Great Commission”



¹¹ While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ telling them, “You must say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴ If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Judeans to this day. ¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

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