

Weekly Rhythm

Exploring Scripture – joining our stories to the story of God’s people

Exodus 33:12-23

Moses seeks assurance that God is with him and the people as he continues to lead them. God promises ever-abiding presence. Moses wants more than words. He asks to see God's glory. God responds by allowing Moses to see the "after-glow" of the Divine Glory as God proclaims the Divine Name from a safe distance.

Moses is seeking reassurance for the journey ahead. Who will be with him? He asks that God continue to teach him. God’s presence with Moses is what it is all about.

What journeys are you on or part of? Think of the journeys that you share in community with others. How would this conversation between God and Moses speak into these journeys?

Psalms 99

This psalm is one among those used at the Israelites’ New Year festival and celebrates the enthronement of the Lord.

Verse 1: the cherubim are winged figures on top of the Ark of the Covenant and symbolise the heavenly creatures surrounding God in worship.

Verse 2: Zion is Jerusalem

Verse 3: God is holy – different from any other. The difference is expanded upon as the psalm continues.

Verse 5: The footstool may be the Ark of the Covenant.

Verse 5-8: These historical figures are described as mediators between God and Israel.

Verse 9: Calls us to worship for God is holy. (The holy hill is Mount Zion the Mount of which Jerusalem and the Temple were built.)

How does the holiness (the otherness) of God give us hope in our world?

Who/what are the mediators that connect you to God?

How does God’s holiness call you into worship?

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul greets the Christians in Thessalonica with gratitude for their example of joyful faith in the face of persecution.

Verse 1: Paul, Silas and Timothy were all present at the beginning of this community in Thessalonica (See Acts 16:1-5 and 17:1-15)

Note that this church is *in* God the Father and Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be *in* God?

Verses 2-10: How do these verses continue to assure the Thessalonians that they are *in* The Father and Son?

If Paul were writing to you how might he reassure you that you are *in* the heart of Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Matthew 22:15-22

In the temple, a group of Pharisees try to trap Jesus, but he traps them in their own hypocrisy and divided allegiances.

“The question (verse 17) was cleverly conceived. No matter what answer Jesus gave, he would condemn himself either as subversive of Roman Law and order or unfaithful to Jewish commandment. Jesus’ answer put the decision back on his questioners. Persons had to decide what their faith and loyalty required them to do. Thus Jesus avoided a trap and left the ethical question to personal decision.” (Basic Bible Commentary)

We do not live in an ideal world, we find ourselves entangled in structures that offer good and bad. How do we live in the midst of all this? We do not hold ourselves apart; we pay to Caesar what is due to Caesar. But we do not simply rubber stamp the structures and their injustice. We know who we are and who guides our steps and whose Kingdom we serve and build. We seek God’s transformation for all.

What do you find difficult about living within the structures of this world?

How might you be challenged by these structures?
How can you be part of Kingdom of God transformation?

Go deeper:

All our passages this week explore **Presence** and **Purpose** in some way. Moses is leading the Israelites on the journey of liberation to their new land. The Thessalonians are witnesses to their salvation. The “trapping” question in Matthew’s gospel is also asking how we live out our faith in a real world. All these journeys and callings are made possible and are encourage by God’s presence and reign.

Think back over this week’s passages and see how they speak to you of purpose and presence. The outline below may help you as you do this:

- Exodus 33:12-23: God with us in the journey of liberation
- Psalm 99: God is on the throne, God is holy, worship the Lord. We are connected to God (mediators)
- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10: The reassurance (and signs) that we are **in** Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Matthew 22:15-22: Engaging the world from a Kingdom of God perspective (this is our journey.)

Today choose one of the above passages that has spoken to you. Read it slowly and out loud. See what strikes your heart.

Some further resources:

Confession

(inspired by Psalm 99)

Forgive us, O God,
when we stumble in the darkness
and turn away from your face.
Strengthen us to walk in your brightness
and live in your ways.
Enlighten the shadows
that keep us from growing
in your love and light.
Shower us with your grace,
that we might shine as your people
upon this earth.

~ from the *Abingdon Worship Annual*, posted on the [Cokesbury](#) website.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and intercession

(inspired by Matthew 22:15-22, I Thessalonians 1:1-10, Exodus 33:12-23)

Companion God,
we praise you for the grace which is always on the move,
from death to life, desolation to hope, famine to feasting.
As we travel this road of pain and rejoicing,
we give thanks that you go with us as our guardian and friend:
that you have taken us by the hand and led us,
giving guidance and support.
Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

- that you have strengthened us for the work of faith,
the labour of love, the steadfastness of hope.
Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

- that you have made us imitators of your saints and disciples,

and of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

- that as we have received your Word with joy,
even in the midst of our suffering,
you have revealed to us your ways.
Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

- that we belong to you and you have shown us your glory.
Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

- that through our example others have been encouraged and
inspired.
Your presence travels with us: **You will give us rest.**

...

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

— Nick Fawcett, adapted by Rev. I. Scott McCarthy and posted on the **Starters for Sunday** website from the Church of Scotland.

Reflection: Matthew 22: 15-22

For many years
we have had the mistaken notion
that all the problems of the world
can be solved with a few dollar bills.

In Jesus' time
the Pharisees came to ask him if they should
pay taxes,
and Jesus, looking at a silver coin,
asked whose face and name were engraved on it.
"The Emperor's," they said.
"Well then, pay to the Emperor what is his" Jesus replied.

Has God's face
ever been on a coin?
We are the coin
that bears the living likeness of God.
Giving of ourselves
with whatever that may include,
is the only legal currency
of the kingdom of heaven.

~ from the [Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand website](#).