

## 2024 Lenten Devotional

Written and prepared for members and friends of Lapeer Free Methodist Church by Sally W. Eilersen, 2024

### Resources used:

Biblegateway.com

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## Week 1. Sunday, February 4, 2024 – Holy, Holy, Holy Attributes of God

### Exodus 34:5-6

*<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,*

An attribute is not something God does; it is who He is. God is **Holy**. When we understand the attributes of God, our hearts open to respond to God, not by what we can do for Him but by standing in awe of who He is.

What is an attribute? The Oxford Dictionary says an attribute is: a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something.

An inherent part of something is permanent. Inseparable. It is not something He does. It is who He is. God IS **Holy**.

What does that mean for us? When we interact with God, we are in the presence of **Holiness**. As followers of God, we invite **Holiness** into our lives. As readers of the Bible, we read about **Holy** places and things, and **Holiness**.

We welcome the Holy Spirit into our lives, our work, our bodies, our souls.

*Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, **holy** and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

**Today: As we begin the Lenten season, let us offer our bodies, our selves, as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.**

## Week 1. Monday, February 5, 2024

### All thy works shall praise thy name

#### Psalm 30:4

*Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people; praise his **holy** name.*

#### I Corinthians 10:31

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

I grew up in a church that sang hymns, accompanied by choirs and a pipe organ. I sang in the youth choirs from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Our organist and choir director were a married couple. He was a professor of music at Wayne State University. They believed that music lifted the soul to heaven. And that we should always do our best. We worked hard, but we had fun, too.

If rehearsal ended early, Mac would sit at the piano and invite us to yell out our favorite hymns – by page number! And you better believe we all knew where our favorites were. (Then we got a new Worshipbook and had to learn all new numbers!)

*Holy, Holy, Holy!* was always called out. Written by Reginald Heber in 1826, it sings of the Holiness of God. Tennyson said it was the world's greatest hymn.

“All the saints adore thee,” “Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,” “Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee” “All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea”

***Today: Join all the works of the Lord and praise His Holy name.***

## Week 1. Tuesday, February 6, 2024

### Awesome in Glory!

#### Exodus 15:11

*Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, **awesome** in glory, working wonders?*

That's Awesome!

Do you remember when everything was Awesome? ! Or Awesomesauce? (That was before everything became Amazing!)

But awesome used to be more than a colloquialism. It had real meaning. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it this way: *Arousing or inspiring awe; that fills someone with reverential fear, wonder, or respect.*

That is the meaning the Biblical authors had in mind when they spoke of the Awesomeness of God. Reverence. Wonder. Respect. Fear. Reverence.

The awesomeness of God is shown to us in so many different ways. God works large miracles – the parting of the Red Sea; feeding the Israelites with manna in the wilderness; Jesus feeding the 4,000, and the 5,000; making the sun stand still for Joshua; the creation of the world; the resurrection of Christ.

But the awesomeness of God is also shown daily, in small miracles. The song of a bird. The purr of a cat. The hug from a loved one. A printed copy of the Bible. The care that surrounds us. The daily examples of the Love of God are Awesome!

***Today: Look around and recognize that the Awesomeness of God surrounds you every day.***

## Week 1. Wednesday, February 7, 2024

### Come and See what God has done!

#### Psalm 66

*For the director of music. A song. A psalm.*

<sup>1</sup> Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

<sup>2</sup> Sing the glory of his name;  
make his praise glorious.

<sup>3</sup> Say to God, "How **awesome** are your deeds!  
So great is your power  
that your enemies cringe before you.

<sup>4</sup> All the earth bows down to you;  
they sing praise to you,  
they sing the praises of your name."<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Come and see what God has done,  
his **awesome** deeds for mankind!

Vision is a miracle. The fact that most of us wake up each morning able to see the world around us. We may wear glasses, (another miracle – a piece of plastic can clarify our vision) but we can see. And hear. And taste. And smell. And touch.

The psalmist wrote of God's great, powerful, awesome deeds. The psalm continues, praising God who "turned the sea into dry land."

But God's awesome deeds for mankind are all around us, in the little things; the things we take for granted.

***Today: Look around you and see what God has done See His Awesome deeds for mankind. And be thankful.***

## Week 1. Thursday, February 8, 2024

### Standing in Awe

#### Isaiah 29:22-23

<sup>22</sup> *Therefore this is what the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the descendants of Jacob:*

*"No longer will Jacob be ashamed;  
no longer will their faces grow pale.*

<sup>23</sup> *When they see among them their children,  
the work of my hands,  
they will keep my name **holy**;  
they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob,  
and will stand in **awe** of the God of Israel.*

<sup>24</sup> *Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding;  
those who complain will accept instruction."*

As we read through the Bible, it can be easy to be frustrated with Israel. How can they forget what God did for them? How can they forget the plagues in Egypt that bypassed Israel? The miracles in the desert? The pillar of cloud that led them and the pillar of fire that lit the night? How can they deny the Holiness of God?

And yet ... how can we? When we look at our children, do we keep His name Holy? Do we stand in awe of our God? We have so much more to remember. We know about the resurrection of Christ – something they could not even imagine.

We are just as wayward in spirit as they. We may not whine about manna, but let's be honest. We complain as much as they did.

***Today: Let us pray that we will keep God's name holy. That we will stand in awe of our God. That we will gain understanding of the mighty God who loves and cares for us. That we will complain less, and praise more.***

**Week 1. Friday, February 9, 2024**

**No one holy like the Lord**

**Samuel 2:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> *Then Hannah prayed and said:*

*“My heart rejoices in the LORD;  
in the LORD my horn is lifted high.  
My mouth boasts over my enemies,  
for I delight in your deliverance.*

<sup>2</sup> *“There is no one **holy** like the LORD;  
there is no one besides you;  
there is no Rock like our God.*

Hannah was a woman of strong faith. But she had no children. In her culture it was very difficult to be childless. So she prayed. And prayed. She prayed so hard, silently but with her lips moving, that the priest, Eli, thought she was drunk. She defended herself, saying she was pouring out her anguish and grief to the Lord. The Lord remembered her, and she had a son, Samuel.

The next part surprises me. After he was weaned, she brought the boy to Eli and said “<sup>27</sup>I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. <sup>28</sup>So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.” Then she prayed the prayer listed above. I don’t know if I could do that.

When the Lord answers our prayers in the fullness of his Holiness, do we praise Him, or do we say “mine, mine”?

***Today: Think of something you prayed for many times before the Lord answered, or perhaps it is not yet answered. When the Lord answers, are you willing to dedicate His gift back to Him? However that may be?***

**Week 1. Saturday, February 10, 2024**

**Songs of Joy**

**Psalm 65: 1-3, 7-9, 12-13**

<sup>1</sup> *Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion;  
to you our vows will be fulfilled.*

<sup>2</sup> *You who answer prayer,  
to you all people will come.*

<sup>3</sup> *When we were overwhelmed by sins,  
you forgave our transgressions.*

<sup>7</sup> *[you] stilled the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
and the turmoil of the nations.*

<sup>8</sup> *The whole earth is filled with **awe** at your wonders;  
where morning dawns, where evening fades,  
you call forth songs of joy.*

<sup>9</sup> *You care for the land and water it;  
you enrich it abundantly...*

<sup>12</sup> *The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;  
the hills are clothed with gladness.*

<sup>13</sup> *The meadows are covered with flocks  
and the valleys are mantled with grain;  
they shout for joy and sing.*

How do we respond to the holiness and awesomeness of God? With songs of joy? Or do we take it for granted? Yes, God answers prayer. Yes, He forgives our sins. Yes, He stills the seas. Yes, he cares for the land, the hills, the meadows. And us. So ...

The earth is filled with awe! Valleys shout with joy and sing!  
How about you?

***Today: Respond to the Holy and Awesome God you serve.***

## Week 2. Sunday, February 11, 2024

### God's Holiness, Our Freedom – Compassion

#### Col 3:12

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with **compassion**, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

#### Ps 145:8-9

The LORD is gracious and **compassionate**, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has **compassion** on all he has made.

As part of my Bible studies, I like to do word searches at Biblegateway.com. I did a search on "compassion". Wow! 82 NIV results were returned, from Exodus to I Peter. From the trials of Israel, through the Psalms, Prophets, Gospels, Romans, letters from Paul, James, and Peter - the writers often appealed to God's compassion, told of Christ's compassionate acts, and encouraged us to show compassion ourselves. But what is compassion?

**Compassion:** a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering

*James 2:16* If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

It reminds me of an old Peanuts cartoon. Snoopy is sitting, shivering in the cold. Charlie Brown and Linus walk and say, "Be of good cheer" and leave. They understood the first half, but neglected the second. How often do we do the same?

**Today: Look for ways you can show God's compassion through word and deed.**

## Week 2. Monday, February 12, 2024

### God's Holiness, Our Freedom – Kindness

#### Gal 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness,

#### Is 63:7

I will tell of the **kindnesses** of the LORD,  
the deeds for which he is to be praised,  
according to all the LORD has done for us—  
yes, the many good things  
he has done for Israel,  
according to his compassion and many **kindnesses**.

Sometimes we think of being "kind" as wimpy, too gentle. It seems like faint praise. But the kindness of God is not only as gentle as a mother's touch, it is as strong as steel.

#### Hosea 11:4

I led them with cords of human **kindness**, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them.

**Jeremiah 31:3b** "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing **kindness**."

#### Romans 2:4

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his **kindness**, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's **kindness** is intended to lead you to repentance?

Ties of love. Everlasting love. Unfailing kindness. Leads us to repentance. The dictionary says kindness is a desire to do good to others. Benevolence. That certainly describes God. He is kind to us, good to us, even when we do not deserve it.

**Today: Show true, Godly kindness to someone.**

## Week 2. Tuesday, February 13, 2024

### God's Holiness, Our Freedom – Humility

**Prov 11:2** *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with **humility** comes wisdom.*

#### **Prov 15:33**

*Wisdom's instruction is to fear the LORD, and **humility** comes before honor.*

The Bible shows that God values humility. The rewards due to those who humble themselves are declared from Chronicles to Peter. And the penalties for those who do not humble themselves are also shown. James and Peter have quite a bit to say about humility, which makes sense. They learned the truth about humility from Jesus himself. Not the feeling of inferiority that we often think of as humility, but having the same mindset as Christ Jesus: **(Phil 2:6-8)**

<sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used  
to his own advantage;*

<sup>7</sup> *rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

<sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man,  
he **humbled** himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!*

As James learned from his big brother **(James 3:13)**

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the **humility** that comes from wisdom.*

**Today: Live your life, with humility! And you will be crowned with victory. (Ps 149:4b He crowns the humble with victory.)**

## Week 2. Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024

### God's Holiness, Our Freedom – Gentleness

#### **Gen 2:7, 3:19**

*Then the LORD God formed a man from the **dust** of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being... "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for **dust** you are and to **dust** you will return."*

**I Kings 19:11-13** <sup>11</sup> *The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a **gentle** whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

**Phil 4:5** *Let your **gentleness** be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

Gentleness and Dust. It is Ash Wednesday, the formal beginning of Lent. It is a time in the Church calendar for Prayer, Fasting, and Giving to the poor. A time to be gentle.

I grew up in a very Roman Catholic neighborhood. On Ash Wednesday, many of my friends came to school with a cross of ashes on their forehead. Later, recess might find us rubbing dust on our Protestant foreheads. As a symbol, nothing is as basic as dust and ash.

That ash reminds us that we are all dust, and to dust we will return. It may remind us of those we've lost in the past year. But it can also remind us that God created us - me - by breathing life into dust.

**Today: Be gentle with yourself and others on this day of remembrance and preparation.**

## Week 2. Thursday, February 15, 2024

### God's Holiness, Our Freedom – Patient

**Psalm 40:1** *I waited **patiently** for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.*

**Romans 12:12** *Be joyful in hope, **patient** in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

Raise your hands if you are patient. No hands? That's what I thought. Not many people can say that patience is one of their gifts. If we are truly honest, we would admit that we aren't patient with God either. We pray and want answers now! And we want the answers according to our will! Aren't we blessed that God is patient?

**II Peter 3:9** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is **patient** with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Reading through the Old Testament I have been reminded over and over of the patience of God. If the Israelites had gods like the Romans, they would have been destroyed a dozen times! Or, even worse, if they had a god like me.

King David had a life filled with blessings, and trials. He was King Saul's favorite, until he wasn't. He had a loving family, until his son brought an army against him. He was an honorable man, who committed adultery and murder. He wrote psalms of praise, joy, despair, sorrow. But David learned to have patience and trust in the Lord.

Psalm 37 starts with "Do not fret" and ends with "He delivers them (the righteous) from the wicked and saves them because they take refuge in him."

**Today: Read Psalm 37, praise & thank God for his patience.**

## Week 2. Friday, February 16, 2024

### God's Holiness, Our Freedom – Peace

**Psalm 29:11** *The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with **peace**.*

**Prov 14:30a** *A heart at **peace** gives life to the body.*

**Is 9:6** *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of **Peace**.*

**Is 26:3** *You will keep in perfect **peace** those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.*

**Matt 5:9** *Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God.*

**John 14:27** ***Peace** I leave with you; my **peace** I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

#### **Gal 5:22-23**

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Of all my Biblical word searches, Peace had the most entries so far – 249 verses. Some are about war and a wish for Peace. Psalms has 17 separate verses praying for or praising Peace.

93 of the verses are in the New Testament, bringing us the Peace of Christ, sharing Peace with the brethren.

Biblical Peace is not the same as worldly Peace. Our world defines Peace as the absence of conflict. God's Peace is not a lack, but a gift, within an individual or between people.

**Today: Read some of the 249 verses about Peace and thank God for His gift of Peace.**

## Week 2. Saturday, February 17, 2024

### God's Holiness, Our Freedom – Love

**Psalm 13:5** *But I trust in your **unfailing love**; my heart rejoices in your salvation.*

**Psalm 23:6** *Surely your goodness and **love** will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

**Psalm 143:8** Let the morning bring me word of your **unfailing love**, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.

**Isaiah 54:10** *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my **unfailing love** for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*

**I Cor 13:4-7** <sup>4</sup> **Love** is patient, **love** is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> **Love** does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

**I John 4:7-9** <sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us **love** one another, for **love** comes from God. Everyone who **loves** has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not **love** does not know God, because God is **love**. <sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his **love** among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

The search for "Love" found 686 verses, 40 of them including the phrase "unfailing love." Dictionary.com has 16 definitions. Can you even have a wedding without I Corinthians 13? This 4 letter word is one of the biggest words we use. People try to make it complicated, but it can be very simple. God is Love.

**Today: Love God. Love Others. Love Yourself.**

## Week 3. Sunday, February 18, 2024

### Holy Ground

#### Exodus 3:1-6

*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."*

<sup>4</sup> *When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"*

*And Moses said, "Here I am."*

<sup>5</sup> *"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

Most of us have seen burning bushes and branches. I'm sure this was not the first bush Moses saw burning. But he didn't glance over and then go back to work. He looked closely. He noticed that this was different. More than that, it was extraordinary. The bush was on fire, but it did not burn up. Moses wanted to know what was going on, so he went closer. He paid attention, and God spoke to him.

How many times has God tried to get our attention? With Moses, God used something ordinary and made it extraordinary. As we read the Bible, we see God using the ordinary over and over – ordinary people, ordinary places, ordinary situations – but in extraordinary ways. How many of those people missed it? How many times have we missed it? How many times have we not been paying attention?

**Today: Pay attention to God and what He is trying to say to you.**



## Week 3. Monday, February 19, 2024

### No ordinary child

**Exodus 1:22 – 2:4** <sup>22</sup> Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.” <sup>1</sup> Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, <sup>2</sup> and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine (*tov*) child, she hid him for three months. <sup>3</sup> But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. <sup>4</sup> His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

**Hebrews 11:23** <sup>23</sup> By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.

Paying attention runs in Moses’ family. His sister watched him, and when Pharaoh’s daughter found him, she was ready to help, by bringing their mother to be his nursemaid.

An ordinary baby was born. The Bible says he was a “fine” or “good” child. The Hebrew word is *tov*, translated as “good” in the story of Creation. Good, but not extraordinary. That starts with his mother. She did not follow the edict of the Pharaoh to kill him. She risked her life to save his. Hebrews says she/ they were not afraid of the King’s edict. As a mom, I disagree with that. I think they were afraid, but they didn’t stop. They had faith that preserving their son was worth the fear.

The Bible is the story of ordinary people who stop to listen, pay attention, and allow God to make them into something extraordinary. We may read about Kings, but we relate to Moses, David, Nehemiah, Jonah, and Job. Ordinary people who follow God to the extraordinary.

**Today: Stop. Pay attention to what God is trying to tell you.**

## Week 3. Tuesday, February 20, 2024

### Turn your Eyes Upon Jesus

#### Psalm 119:35-37

<sup>35</sup> Direct me in the path of your commands,  
for there I find delight.

<sup>36</sup> Turn my heart toward your statutes  
and not toward selfish gain.

<sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes away from worthless things;  
preserve my life according to your word.

The hymn *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus* has been on my mind as I write this week. Written in 1918 by Helen Howarth Lemmel, it was inspired by a tract given to her by a missionary friend. “Suddenly, as if commanded to stop and listen, I stood still, and singing in my soul and spirit was the chorus...”

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace.<sup>1</sup>*

Stop and listen. Turn your eyes. God wants us to pay attention!

But that’s not the end of the story. God wants us to listen, and then go and do!

*His word shall not fail you – He promised;  
Believe Him, and all will be well:  
Then go to a world that is dying,  
His perfect salvation to tell!<sup>1</sup>*

What does it mean to turn our eyes upon Jesus? We may discover what Moses did – wherever we are, we are standing on Holy ground.

**Today: Take a moment to see the Holy Ground that surrounds you.**

<sup>1</sup> *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*, Copyright © 1922 Singspiration Music/ASCAP. Used by permission of Benson Music Group, Inc.

## Week 3. Wednesday, February 21, 2024

### Turn the Ordinary into the Extraordinary

**Matthew 5:10-12** <sup>10</sup> *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* <sup>11</sup> *Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.* <sup>12</sup> *Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

When Pastor Bruce and I shared about this, he said this week is “When we pay attention, God can speak to us by turning the ordinary into the extraordinary. (Bonhoeffer – extraordinary)”

I learned about Dietrich Bonhoeffer in high school, but I didn’t read him for myself until college. Honestly, I haven’t read him since college. So, I pulled out my copy of *Meditations on the Cross* to remind myself of what he means by “extraordinary.”

“Suffering encountered in the love of the one who is crucified – *that* is the “extraordinary” in Christian existence. ... It cannot remain hidden; people must see it ... What is the peculiar thing you are *doing*? The extraordinary ... is something the disciples do. It must be done ... and must be done visibly... in whole-hearted Christian obedience to Jesus’ will. The activity will prove to be “peculiar” by leading the active person into Christ’s own passion. This activity itself is perpetual suffering and enduring.” <sup>2</sup>

That’s on the first page of the book. Later Bonhoeffer says “Each of us is to bear the measure of suffering and rejection specifically appointed for us. And the measure is different for each of us.”<sup>3</sup>

**Today: Am I doing anything in wholehearted obedience that is suffering for Christ? Or am I just coasting?**

<sup>2</sup> “The Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5”. in *The Cost of Discipleship Preliminary version, London 1934/35 Final version: Finkenwalde (Pomerania), Theological Seminary, 1936/37. As published in Meditations on the Cross by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1998*

<sup>3</sup> *The Cost of Discipleship Final version: Finkenwalde (Pomerania), Theological Seminary, 1936/37*

## Week 3. Thursday, February 22, 2024

### A Peculiar People

**I Peter 2:9** (King James Translation) *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

(NIV) *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said we are called to be Extraordinary. Keith Green said we are called to be a Peculiar People; then he’d say, “And I’ve got that part down pat!” The NIV translates *a peculiar people* as *God’s special possession*.

They are both right. As Christians, we are called to be different. To be God’s people, separate from the world. In it, but not of it.

Living a life that is “extraordinary” in Bonhoeffer’s world means to live with suffering and rejection. At age 39, he was executed by the Nazi government as a traitor in Flossenburg concentration camp, only days before it was liberated by the American Army. His last words were “This is the end – for me, the beginning of life.”

Keith Green lived according to one of his album titles – *No Compromise*. Green once said: “If your heart takes more pleasure in reading novels, or watching TV, or going to the movies, or talking to friends, rather than just sitting alone with God and embracing him, sharing his cares and his burdens, weeping and rejoicing with him, then how are you going to handle forever and ever in his presence? You’d be bored to tears in heaven, if you’re not ecstatic about God now!” He died in a private plane crash in 1982. He was 28 years old. I remember hearing the announcement on the radio.

**Today: Are you living an Extraordinary life? Are you one of God’s Peculiar People? Are you paying attention to God or to the world?**

## Week 3. Friday, February 23, 2024

### A Suffering Servant

**Isaiah 53 :3-5** (please read the entire chapter)

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

Last year, I bought a Lenten devotional using the works of van Gogh from [www.saltproject.org](http://www.saltproject.org) (They have many Lenten and Holy Week devotionals available.) They began with van Gogh's painting *Still Life with Bible*. Look at it online. If you look closely, you will see that the Bible is open to Isaiah 53.

In a letter, van Gogh wrote "I myself am always glad that I have read the Bible more thoroughly than many people nowadays, because it eases my mind somewhat to know that there were once such lofty ideas."

I admire the painting, but I disagree (partly) with van Gogh. The Bible is not full of "lofty ideas." It is full of the Word of God. It is Extraordinary. It is Peculiar. It is Personal. It is Immortal. It is Divine.

Why do I only disagree with him partly? Because he has read the Bible "thoroughly." Have we?

**Today: Read a passage from your Bible. Maybe as part of your 90 day reading. Maybe a favorite. Maybe Isaiah 53. Whatever you read, take time to read it thoroughly.**

## Week 3. Saturday, February 24, 2024

### See

**John 9:25b** *One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*

One of my Lenten Devotionals is *Pauses for Lent, 40 Words for 40 Days* by Trevor Hudson. Each day focuses on one word, with a scripture reference, and a daily practice.

One of the words is "See." Hudson writes "Christian faith involves a new way of seeing. When Jesus becomes part of our lives, we see people and things more clearly in our world." <sup>4</sup>The Daily Practice for that day is to truly look at God's creation, the natural world, and each person you meet.

We started this week with Moses walking over to the burning bush and really looking at it. Seeing it. Because he took those steps, he looked and he listened, the world changed.

Do you think God is still sending us messages? I do. I'll admit to not seeing any burning bushes lately, or ever. But God has sent messages to me through his Word, his people, and in so many ways. Passages from books, "Christian" or not. A note from a friend. A Facebook post. A newspaper article. An email. A random comment. A song. A bird in the yard. A beautiful flower. A fallen leaf. A photo. A painting. But I have to Look to truly See.

But what if I am not looking for a message from God? What if I am not seeing?

Moses was paying attention. He saw something that was unusual. Extraordinary. Peculiar. He could have reacted in fear, running away. But he didn't. He walked over to it. He took time out of his day, away from his responsibilities, to see what God wanted to Say to him. He not only saw, he listened. And he obeyed.

**Today: Take time to Look at God's Creation, God's People, God's Word. Pay attention and truly See.**

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