



Today

March/April 2026

refresh, refocus, renew

**THE START OF
SOMETHING**

BIG!

ALSO: 'GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS'

Dear Friends:

For many Christians, the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” is a favorite. This hymn proclaims one of the bedrock themes of the Bible: God’s enduring faithfulness to his promises for all people. In March, Jul Medenblik traces the theme of God’s great faithfulness throughout the Bible. Beginning in Genesis, we see God’s plan emerging to bless all nations through his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. And as we see God’s plan of redemption unfolding and widening throughout the Old and New Testaments, we discern many surprising ways in which God truly is faithful. As we grow in understanding God’s faithfulness, may we also grow in our desire to be faithful in loving God and serving others.



On Easter in the first week of April, Christians will celebrate with joy the amazing resurrection of Jesus, who died to save us and then rose to life again. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus graciously gives us new birth and a new beginning. Dave Den Haan helps us to explore what this means as we consider that living “in Christ,” through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, makes us new creations who strive each day to live with gratitude and faithfulness. And as Christ makes us new, he invites us to join in God’s big project of redeeming and renewing his world.

As you enjoy these meditations, may you be refreshed, refocused, and renewed!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kurt Selles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kurt Selles

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“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”
Jul Medenblik



**“The Start of
Something BIG!”**
Dave Den Haan

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**ReFrame
Ministries**

is the new name of
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march

'Great Is Thy Faithfulness'

Jul Medenblik

This series of meditations is dedicated to God's faithfulness to his people—all who believe in the Lord and trust in his promises. The story of God's love and care for us is presented in the Bible, where we read of God's plan to bring redemption to the world and to bless all nations through his people, from whom the Savior of the world has come. That Savior is Jesus Christ, whose birth was foretold in one of the Bible's earliest chapters. Let's reflect together on how God worked faithfully for generations to bring about his salvation, and how the Lord still welcomes, leads, and guides us into full life in his kingdom today.

Rev. Jul Medenblik is a former attorney who was called to pastoral ministry and became the church-planting pastor of a congregation in New Lenox, Illinois. Since 2011 he has served as the seventh president of Calvin Theological Seminary, which, together with Calvin University, is celebrating 150 years of God's faithfulness in their history as the educational institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (see calvinseminary.edu/150th). Jul and his wife, Jackie, have been married for over 40 years and are blessed with two adult children and a son-in-law.

FAITHFULNESS IN THE JOURNEY

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. . . .
—Psalm 23:4

Bible teachers have often wondered about the setting of this song of David. When was it written?

In Psalm 23 we find descriptions of the work of a young man who herded and guarded his father's sheep, finding calm pastureland and plenty of water so that the sheep could eat and drink.

We also hear echoes of David's life as a king, in which he often had to be wary of enemies. God provided a banquet table and an anointing or blessing, providing protection, abundance, and favor despite those enemies.

In addition, we observe the reflections of an older man, looking back on his journey of life and looking forward to living with the Lord . . . forever!

Many key phrases in this psalm have been read at commemorative services and at

funerals. One key word is *through*. When you are in the midst of trouble and hardship, you want to know that it will come to an end. You want to be assured that you will come out on the other side.

We can get through the darkest valleys in life knowing that God is with us. This month, as we review key texts about the faithfulness of God in the Bible, we will see again and again that God's faithfulness is part of the promise of his presence with us.

In what areas do you need the assurance of God's presence in your life?

Lord, may we know your presence so that we can take every step with you, no matter what is before us. Thank you for being our shepherd. Amen.

FAITHFULNESS IN THE MORNING

His compassions never fail. They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. —Lamentations 3:22-23

Have you ever lost sleep because your mind and heart were busy or burdened? You can lie down and try to fall asleep, but sleep won't come.

Jeremiah surely knew what that was like. He often poured out his heart and soul to God and to his people, but most of the people ignored what he had to say as God's prophet. At times he was even put in prison for speaking God's Word.

Jeremiah lamented over the people who denied God and persecuted him. The book of Lamentations is a brief collection of some of those laments. They are a companion piece to the narrative provided in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah had done all he could to bring God's Word to his people, but it was not enough. Even so, one of the great hymns of faith—"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"—arises from the passage we have read for today.

I have often wondered how a great song about faithfulness could be born out of lament. Yet this is a key insight for us to ponder. When times are good, we tend to forget about God and rely on ourselves. But when times are hard and we cry out to God in our struggles, we can often see God and his work more clearly. God's love, compassion, and faithfulness stand out against the darkness of sin and destruction.

God is with us always, and he promises new beginnings and new life each day to all who seek him. "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" is a song we can sing every day!

God of all days and nights, thank you for your faithfulness to us each day and throughout every season. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

FAITHFUL GOD

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
—Genesis 3:15

The story in Genesis 3 is often described as "the fall into sin." Adam and Eve started with a wonderful, day-by-day relationship with God, but then one day they sinned. And they hid from God in their shame. God had said they should not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). But then the devil, Satan, planted seeds of doubt in their minds, and they disobeyed. They ate the forbidden fruit and fell from their close relationship with God.

The curse of disobeying, God had said, would be death. But Adam and Eve did not die that day. God sought them out and did not strike them down. They also failed to take the blame for their actions, and God took the consequences of their sin on himself. It turned out that one day his own Son, who was also their offspring,

would give up his own life to pay for the sins of all people (Matthew 1:18-25).

Friends are faithful to each other. God is always a friend to us, but we are not equally faithful. We sin. We are often unfaithful, but God is faithful.

How could God make us right with him? The plan of salvation is not what we would expect. It was not fully visible to Adam and Eve, but it started, continued, and became complete when God sent his Son, born of a woman, to live without sin and to give his life to pay for all our sin. What an amazing, faithful God!

Dear God, we sin in many ways every day. Thank you for being faithful, and please help us to live faithfully for you. In Jesus, Amen.

PAIN AND NEW BIRTH

“God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.”
—Genesis 4:25

God had told Adam and Eve that there would be consequences for their sin. When Eve gave birth to Cain and then Abel, she experienced the pain of childbirth—but, sadly, more pain would come.

As the boys grew up, one was drawn to till the soil, and the other to keep flocks. But when they brought offerings to God from the fruits of their labors, there was a difference. Abel brought the best portions, but Cain brought merely “some of the fruits of the soil.” God looked with favor on Abel, but not on Cain. Jealousy sparked, and Cain grew angry while Abel grew closer to God. Cain nurtured his anger, and eventually he killed his brother.

Adam and Eve grieved the loss of one son by death and of the other by banishment through the just judgment of God. Their home was no longer full. The pain of childbirth could

not compare to the pain of losing both sons.

Then Adam and Eve conceived again and welcomed a new child, and Eve gave praise for what God granted.

Some of you know the pain of losing a child. Some wonder if God can bring new life in after such a loss. Pain is not the end of our story because God, who loves us, is present with us.

Through Adam and Eve’s new child, Seth, God began preparing a way for his own Son, Jesus, to come into the world. And he became the Savior from sin for all who believe in him.

Dear God, help us to see beyond our pain and to trust that you can bring us healing and even joy again. Thank you for being present with us. In Jesus, Amen.

AFTER THE FLOOD

God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant . . . between me and all life on the earth." —Genesis 9:17

God works in line with his character and principles—and he has made those clear to us, as we can see in this passage and in others. For example, there are consequences to sin and evil. When the earth was filled with wickedness, God made a clean slate by sending a flood (Genesis 6-8). And God chose Noah and his family to make a new start.

Yet as Noah and his family took tentative steps into this new beginning, God encouraged them by making a promise: "Never again will all life be destroyed by . . . a flood." And this promise was not only for Noah's family; it was for all future generations.

In this covenant, God does not rely on Noah and his descendants to keep from sinning. In fact, sin continues in the human story. The only way that this promise or covenant can be kept is if God is willing to

step in and hold both ends of it. God notes also that the rainbow will be a sign of his enduring promise. The rainbow will be a reminder of his covenant with us and with "all living creatures of every kind."

This story shows us a pattern that began to unfold early in our history: God is the covenant maker and the covenant keeper for us and for our salvation.

Dear God, thank you for your care for us and for all of your creation. Help us to understand that you care for all of life. May we see it as your precious work that you faithfully love and hold in your hands. Amen.

THE CALL TO FOLLOW

“Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.” —Genesis 12:1

Abram and Sarai will become key figures in the story of God’s covenant and his plan for salvation.

When we first meet this couple, they do not have children (Genesis 11:30). In those days, if a couple could not have a child, that was usually seen as a sign that God had chosen not to bless them. But that was a mistaken notion.

God called Abram to go to another land that God would show him. We aren’t told exactly why—but the initial step in this relationship came from God, who promised to bless Abram and to make him and Sarai into a great nation, and the next step was to follow where God would lead. But that could not have been easy.

Abram was told to leave his country, his people, and his father’s household. All that he had known for providing a lev-

el of security and safety was to be left behind.

Where would they go? God didn’t say, but he did promise to show them. Trusting in the call of God would place them on a journey that would totally change their lives.

When we head out on a journey, we like to know where we are going and how we can get there safely. Yet when God calls, there is usually a step of faith involved. God calls us to put our trust in him and not in what we already have or know. And his faithfulness is a gift that can only be received by hands open to him.

Lord, may we come to you with open hands and hearts. Help us to rely on you, knowing that all we have is ultimately from you. Amen.

WHO IS SHE?

Pharaoh . . . sent [Abram] on his way, with his wife and everything he had.
—Genesis 12:20

It was a time of famine, and Abram and Sarai needed food. There was food in Egypt, but going there could be dangerous. (This would not be the first time God's people sought food in Egypt during a famine, and this episode foreshadows events that took place later in the story of Abram's descendants—see Genesis 37-50.)

As Abram and Sarai entered Egypt, Abram came up with a plan. He told Sarai, in effect, "If people ask who you are, I will tell them you are my sister. If I say you are my wife, they might kill me to get to you."

So a deception began, and one lie led to another. Before long, Sarai was taken to become a wife in Pharaoh's household. And the truth came out when God protected Sarai by inflicting diseases on Pharaoh and his household. (Some years later, a similar type of cover-up took place in the life of

Abram's son Isaac during another famine—Genesis 26.)

Abram had thought he was providing for himself and his wife, but he learned that it is God who provides and protects. Pharaoh could easily have killed Abram for his actions, but God provided protection for him in that way too.

Instead of being killed, Abram was sent away with all the gifts he had received when Sarai was taken into the palace. And those blessings came ultimately through the faithful provision of God.

Dear God, so often we think we can protect and provide for ourselves. Please take away our deception and pride, and help us to see that you alone are the one who provides. Amen.

COVENANT CREATION

“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”
—Genesis 15:1

How long can you live on a promise? Abram and Sarai had lived with God's promise of a child for many years. Their faith was being tested, and their hope was beginning to fade.

One evening God came to renew his promise to Abram, saying that his descendants would be as many as the stars in the night sky. Abram's faith was strengthened—and God provided even more.

Our reading for today shows how God not only approaches people but also creates a pathway of relating to them. In this passage we read about a special kind of covenant (a binding promise) in which two parties would walk between the split carcasses of animals, as if to say, “May the same be done to me if I break my promise.” But here we find that only God goes between the carcasses. While Abram is in a

deep, trance-like sleep, God himself takes on both sides of this covenant. This arrangement will have twists and turns, and God looks to the future, telling Abram that his descendants will become slaves in Egypt. But God also promises to bring them back—and he does that (see Exodus 12-20; Deuteronomy 1-3).

Since history began, people have tried to grab for themselves whatever they think their “great reward” should be. But God offers himself, making clear that the way to full life comes from understanding that the Lord is our shield and our ultimate reward.

Dear God, thank you for making the way and providing for us. May we remember that you always provide for us and for our salvation. Amen.

MORE THAN WE CAN IMAGINE

“Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”
—Genesis 21:18

God is faithful beyond our ability to think or imagine.

Some years earlier, Sarah (formerly Sarai) had come up with a plan to produce an heir for Abraham (formerly Abram). Her scheme was outside of God’s plan (Genesis 16-17), but she decided to try it anyway. She gave her servant, Hagar, to Abram to see if she could have a child for her. Hagar conceived, and her child was named Ishmael. At first, Sarah saw the birth of Ishmael as a good thing, but that became a threat when her own son, Isaac, was born. So Sarah decided to remove that threat. Despite the protests of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. They wandered aimlessly in the desert, but God provided for them and promised to raise up Ishmael into a nation also.

Have you ever tried to limit God’s faithfulness to include

only certain people or those who act in a certain way? In the Bible, God shows that his plans and purposes go beyond our expectations.

At many funerals I have conducted over the years, I have often stated this biblical truth: “God is more faithful and just than we can ever imagine.” This can be a comfort to people who wonder about God and may also fear for their loved ones who have died. In such moments I often think of a teenager (Ishmael) and his distraught mother, who found that God was with them—in ways beyond our imagining.

Lord, thank you for your surprising faithfulness and care. Open our eyes to the ways you are continually at work in our lives—and far beyond. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

WRESTLING WITH GOD

“Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.”
—Genesis 32:28

Jacob was a schemer. It came naturally. His mother was a schemer, and so was his father (see Genesis 26-27). Scheming was part of the family DNA.

Jacob was returning home and wondering what kind of reception he would have from his brother, Esau, whom he had schemed against many years earlier (Genesis 27).

But then one night when Jacob was all alone, he faced the one who could not be outwitted. Jacob wrestled that night with God.

We might think of this wrestling with God as being for one night, but wasn't it more like for a lifetime? Jacob had wrestled through lots of situations in his life, all of which were in the hands of God. For example, Esau, his elder brother, was the favored son of his father, and Jacob dealt with that by scheming. Jacob also wres-

tled with finding love and wondering if he could ever return home.

We might think of wrestling with God as the opposite of seeking to know and learn from God, but in this case the wrestling became a pathway to a new life signified by a new name. Jacob, now known as Israel, would go through life limping because of that night, but he would have in that limp a sign that God had come to him and blessed him as he faced an uncertain future.

God showed up even for a schemer like Jacob.

Lord, thank you for being willing to wrestle with Jacob. We can see you are willing to wrestle with us too. Give us what we need in order to follow you. Amen.

A FAVORITE SON—A DESPISED BROTHER

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him. . . . —Genesis 37:4

Jacob should have known better. He knew what it was like to have a brother whom his father loved more than him (Genesis 25:27-28), but he favored his son Joseph over his other sons anyway. Sadly, that led to jealousy and resentment among Joseph's brothers.

When Joseph's older brothers looked at him, their blood pressure went up and hatred filled their hearts. Still, they might have kept their emotions in check if Joseph hadn't stirred the pot with notions about the dreams he had had.

God had provided the dreams, but Joseph took pride in them. He interpreted those dreams as showing that he was better than his brothers, and even his father rebuked him for the self-centered nature of those interpretations. The meaning of those dreams became clear later (Genesis 41-47), but all that the brothers knew now

was that they didn't want anything to do with Joseph!

In this story we eventually see that God can take the human failings of all of these broken family members to bring about something good, despite the sinful attitudes in each individual's heart. We also learn in life that God works through the troubles in our world and in our hearts to make something new and better. He is faithful to the purpose and plan that he holds and creates for us.

Lord, thank you for being willing to meet us in the messes and troubles of life. Open our eyes to see the sin in our own hearts before we see the failings of others. Help us to live in unity as your family and to spread your love and blessings to others. Amen.

FROM DREAMS TO DISASTER

“Let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”
—Genesis 37:20

Jacob sent Joseph to check up on his brothers. They saw him coming from a distance, and their jealous, hateful feelings toward him took a mean turn. Several of them wanted to kill Joseph.

Not all of the brothers had the same level of anger, though. Reuben tried to save Joseph. And Judah did not want them all to have their brother’s blood on their hands, so he suggested they sell Joseph to some traveling merchants who were passing by. And the brothers agreed.

At the end of this scene, their father, Jacob, is distraught and cannot be consoled. The blood of a goat covers Joseph’s robe. And the brothers probably wonder if they will ever be found out, but for now their father accepts the scam that Joseph the dreamer has been killed by a wild animal. They

think their brother, now sold to be a slave in Egypt, will not be heard from again. And they assume their life can go back to something like normal.

But God is faithful even in the midst of violence, treachery, and tears. As the story continues, we will see how God works behind the scenes. Despite the brothers’ hateful jealousy and anger, God works out a way to raise up Joseph and, through him, to save the lives of many people—including his family—from starvation.

In what ways do you see God working in your life?

Dear God, thank you for working through pain and loss. Guide our hearts and help us to see what you see in this world and in the people around us. Amen.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.
—Genesis 40:23

Joseph's experience in Egypt took many twists and turns. One moment he was trusted by Potiphar, one of the king's officials, and the next moment he was imprisoned because of false accusations from Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39).

In prison Joseph found favor with the warden. But would there ever be a way out?

One day Joseph met the king's cupbearer and baker, who were sent to prison for making the king angry, and one night both of those men had strange dreams. The next day, the cupbearer and the baker were confused and burdened by their dreams, and Joseph asked why they looked so sad. When they shared their dreams with him, Joseph was able to help, explaining that "interpretations belong to God." Joseph the dreamer was now wiser, recognizing that God was always helping him (Genesis 39:23).

Both good news and bad news were in those dreams. Soon the cupbearer was restored to Pharaoh's court, just as Joseph had said in his interpretation, and Joseph likely wondered what would happen next. But the cupbearer forgot about Joseph—for quite a while.

In that prison, however, God was still watching over Joseph and providing for him. As we often find in our own and others' lives, there is always more to the story that God is working out.

Dear God, thank you for working in our lives even when we face struggles and it's hard for us to see or understand what you are doing. Help us to know that even in our times of waiting you are still at work. Amen.

FROM PRISONER TO RULER

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."
Genesis 41:41

Joseph remained in prison for two years before the king's cupbearer remembered him.

One night Pharaoh had two dreams that troubled him deeply, and when he searched for someone to interpret the dreams, the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph. So Pharaoh called for Joseph to interpret the dreams, and Joseph responded by saying, first of all, "I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires" (Genesis 41:1-16).

Pharaoh learned that his dreams warned about a seven-year famine that would follow seven years of great abundance. When he received the interpretation, as well as the sound advice Joseph gave about preparing for the famine, Pharaoh knew that Joseph would be the right person to manage the harvesting so that Egypt would have enough food (41:17-40). So Pharaoh

put Joseph in charge of the whole land to prepare for the years of abundance and famine that would come.

God can work in our lives in amazing ways. Though none of this was easy for Joseph, we can see in this story that he learned to trust and serve God in faith while he was in prison—and also when he was freed and appointed to lead.

The faithfulness of God becomes clearer to us over time and through many different experiences, some of which are life-changing. We learn steadiness and certainty as God walks with us faithfully.

Dear God, thank you for weaving together the circumstances of our lives and showing us how you work in them. May we see you at work in our lives each day. Amen.

FINDING MORE THAN FOOD IN EGYPT

“I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us. . . .”
—Genesis 42:2

Like many others during the seven years of famine, Jacob's family and flocks were running out of food. So Jacob sent his sons to go and buy food in Egypt, where they had heard there was plenty.

All of the brothers except Benjamin, the youngest, went on this journey of desperation. They must have wondered, “Will there be food for all of us coming from another country? And what will happen to our family while we are away?”

Joseph came face-to-face with the brothers who had hated him enough to sell him into slavery. What emotions filled his heart when he saw them again? Was he tempted to get revenge and harm them?

Now wiser, Joseph came up with a way to test his brothers, to see if they had changed in the many years since they had gotten rid of him. Joseph's life

had seen alarming twists and turns, and a similar journey now began for his brothers. Through a series of tests and questioning, Joseph learned that his father was still alive and that his brothers were sorry for the wrong they had done (Genesis 42-44). And the Lord worked through all of this to bring about reconciliation and forgiveness, drawing this family back together again.

In what ways have you seen God working at reconciliation in your life or in the lives of people around you?

Dear God, you know we need more than food. We need restored relationships with you and with one another. Thank you for shaping our stories in the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. In Jesus, Amen.

GOD'S PRESERVATION PLAN UNFOLDS

“God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”
—Genesis 45:7

Joseph had tested his brothers and had learned that they wanted to protect Benjamin, his younger brother, and to spare their father from any more grief. He could see they were sorry for what they had done to him so many years ago. So he told them, at last, who he really was, and they were stunned and terrified.

The brothers knew that they had deeply hurt Joseph when they had sold him into slavery. They knew that their deception had also hurt their father. Their deception had served them in the moment, but now the truth was coming out. They were the reason why Joseph had come to Egypt as a slave. They were the reason why he had suffered for years. Now that Joseph was in a position of power, the brothers wondered how he would deal with them. No wonder they

were terrified as Joseph made himself known to them.

But Joseph saw the hand of God at work in all that had happened. And he explained to his brothers what God had done. Joseph testified that God had sent him ahead of them into Egypt so that his plan for their lives would continue—and much more: that the lives of many people would be saved.

Again God was doing more than we would think or imagine—working out his promise to Abraham and making his family a blessing to the nations.

Dear God, thank you for your work in our lives—preparing the way for us, walking with us, and watching our backs so that we can have life with you. Amen.

A NEW KIND OF VISION

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”
—Genesis 50:20

Joseph brought his father and all his brothers and their families to live in Egypt so that they would have plenty during the years of famine. Their father, Jacob, died in Egypt, and after they buried him back at home in the land of Canaan, they all returned to Egypt (Genesis 46:1-50:14).

Now Joseph's brothers began to worry that he still had a grudge against them. While Jacob was alive, they thought they had a line of defense to keep Joseph from seeking revenge for selling him as a slave, but now they wondered what would happen next.

The brothers sent a message to Joseph, in which they admitted their sins against him and pleaded for forgiveness. Although they had been living near Joseph for several years now in Egypt, they were still not sure of his feelings toward

them. Had he really forgiven them? Joseph wept when he received their message. He had already forgiven his brothers, but it can take years for reconciliation to take shape.

When Joseph's brothers came to him, he reassured them and helped them to see again that God had intended all of this for good. Indeed, God was working out his plan to make their family into a nation that would bring blessing to all others (Genesis 12:1-3).

This was a new kind of vision to help people see the amazing ways God works in our lives and in his world.

Dear God, help us to see not just the hurts and troubles in this world but also how you work to bring us life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

GOD'S GREATER AUTHORITY

Because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.
—Exodus 1:21

In our story today, at the beginning of the book of Exodus, we learn that many years have passed since Jacob and his family went to live in Egypt. Joseph, who had ruled at the king's right hand, is long gone and forgotten. A new king reigns over the land, and this Pharaoh sees the Israelites—the descendants of Jacob—as a great threat to his power. So he aims to control and contain them.

Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, put slave masters over the Israelites, using them as laborers to build new cities. The people of Israel kept multiplying, though, so the king also ordered that their baby boys be killed. Midwives, who were trained to be helpers in childbirth, were assigned to be killers instead.

The authority of Pharaoh dominates this narrative, but another authority is at work in this story too. In fact, much of the

early part of this book of the Bible is about battles between the gods of Egypt and the one, true God, who chose to bless all nations through the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham.

The midwives trusted in God rather than the Pharaoh, however, so they chose to be servants of life rather than death. Their actions helped the people of Israel to increase, and the Lord blessed them with families of their own.

Again we see that God is faithful to his promises.

Dear God, help us to be agents of life wherever we may be, and help us to honor you with our lives. Lord, thank you for blessing us, and may we trust and serve you faithfully. Amen.

FROM THE RIVER TO THE PALACE

When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. —Exodus 2:10

A time of persecution for God's people in Egypt led to a unique plan. God would raise up a leader for his people and eventually deliver them from slavery.

A baby boy was born in Israel to a family in the tribe of Levi. Under the edict of Pharaoh, this child was under a death sentence. But his mother hid him and kept him safe. Then, after a few months, she placed him in a waterproof basket and set it near the shore among the reeds of the Nile River.

The daughter of Pharaoh came to the river to bathe, and she discovered the baby there. The child was crying, and her heart went out to him. Pharaoh's daughter wanted to adopt this baby as her own. So she worked out a plan with the boy's mother, and when he was older, she took him to live with her as her own son in the

palace of the king. "She named [the boy] Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water,'" and his name reverberates throughout Bible history.

As we continue in this journey of exploring God's faithfulness, we again see that God can do surprising things and use all kinds of people to be instruments in his plan.

The palace of Pharaoh became the place where God raised up a leader who would help to bring his people out of slavery. What seemed an impossible situation became a pathway to the future.

Dear God, when we cannot see a way forward, help us to trust that you hold the future. Keep us attentive to what you are doing in the lives of all people as you keep your promises. Amen.

FROM THE PALACE TO THE WILDERNESS

God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham. . . .
—Exodus 2:24

Life in the palace was a privilege. Moses had a privileged position, and he could go out to see whatever he wanted to. Then he could return to enjoy the comforts of palace living.

One day, however, Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew—an Israelite (one of his own people)—and he felt compelled to step in. Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. But that violence became the reason why Moses had to separate from Pharaoh and run for his life out into the wilderness.

Like all of us, Moses could do bad things as well as good things. He had killed a person—and that was bad, even if the man he killed was beating a fellow Hebrew. Moses also came to the rescue of the daughters of a priest in Midian. And that kindness led him to become part of a family, marrying one of the priest's daugh-

ters and becoming the father of a baby boy.

Yet something was missing. Moses named his son Gershon, saying, "I have become a foreigner in a foreign land." Though he had a new family, Moses was not living with his people, the Israelites. Back in Egypt, while he lived in the king's palace, Moses had not lived with his people either. He had not yet received his calling from God.

These wilderness years were a time of preparation for Moses, as God heard the cries of his covenant people and arranged to deliver them.

Dear God, help us know that when we are in the wilderness, you are still with us. May we listen to your call on our lives, wherever we are. Amen.

AT THE BURNING BUSH

“Now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” Exodus 3:10

While tending sheep in the wilderness, Moses saw a burning bush that did not burn up. As he went closer to try to see what was happening, a voice called out from the bush, and Moses learned that God himself was talking to him.

God told Moses to remove his sandals, for he was standing on holy ground. Then God explained that he was going to rescue his people from slavery in Egypt and take them back to the land he had promised to their father Abraham. God also said that he had chosen Moses to go to confront Pharaoh and bring the people out of there. And for Moses to do that, God would need to empower Moses to serve him.

Moses was right to ask, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh . . . ?” And he wondered what to tell the Israelites about who was sending him. Then God identified himself as “I AM

WHO I AM,” and he instructed Moses to tell the Israelites that “the LORD”—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—was sending him to them.

Moses and the people would learn that ultimately their identity was shaped by their relationship to I AM—that is, to the one true God. Moses and the people could not move forward without knowing I AM.

The same is true for us. Our understanding of who we are today is directly related to our being in relationship with the living, faithful God.

Dear God, without you, we have no bearing or guidance on who we are and what we are to do in this world. Help us to hear your voice so that we can know and follow you. In Jesus, Amen.

LEAVING EGYPT

The LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt. . . .
—Exodus 12:42

It was not easy to convince the Pharaoh of Egypt to release the people of God from slavery. Finally, after a series of ten plagues that brought suffering, destruction, and even death to countless families throughout the land (Exodus 7-12), Pharaoh urged the Israelites to go.

Moses had also told the Israelites to ask the people of Egypt for clothing and silver and gold, and the Lord “made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for.” So the people of Israel left Egypt that night with plenty of supplies—even great wealth—along with their flocks and herds of animals.

Surely this was more than the Israelites could have imagined. They had been slaves for generations in the land of Egypt, and now the Lord had made it possible for them to be freed. What’s more, the God of Abra-

ham, Isaac, and Jacob had provided abundantly more than they would need as they began their journey to the land God had promised them.

One of the key phrases in this passage is that God “kept vigil.” Have you ever kept vigil? As a parent, I remember times of watching over a sick child during the night, constantly checking to see if our child was all right and moving into recovery. God is like a parent watching over his children—always. The Lord cares for us, wanting each one to flourish and enjoy the blessings of full life.

Dear God, thank you for watching over us. We may wonder where you are at times—we may even cry out—but may we see and trust that you hold us faithfully in your hands. Amen.

GOD RE-CREATES HIS PEOPLE

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”
—Exodus 20:2

When we think about the faithfulness of God, the Ten Commandments are probably not among the first things that come to mind. After all, one of the main uses of God’s law is to show us that we are sinners. The commandments help us to see that we need God to save us from sin and that we need to confess our sins and ask the Lord for forgiveness.

When God first gave his law to his people, they had been rescued from slavery in Egypt, but they were still dealing with being slaves to sin. God was calling them to live a new life in him that would serve as a blessing to all nations, and they needed to learn that.

So do we. God’s commands are designed to be a guide for daily living, reminding us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. The law ulti-

mately points us to Jesus for salvation and shows us how to live in gratitude to the one, true, faithful God.

God knew that his people who first heard the Ten Commandments would soon wander from him and break their promises. But at the heart of their new creation is the faithful God who will always seek them and watch over them.

God is faithful from one generation to the next. Just as he sought after and cared for his people in the desert, God faithfully seeks after and cares for us every day.

Lord, thank you for your commandments. May we follow them as your re-created people—saved by grace to live for you in a world that still needs to know you as the one, true, faithful God. Amen.

NEED FOR A MEDIATOR

The LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.
—Exodus 32:14

While Moses met with God and received the law for the people, he was away for a long time—40 days and nights (Exodus 24:18). The people of Israel grew tired of waiting and wondered why they couldn't make an image of God that they could see for themselves. Aaron, the brother of Moses, had seen all the goodness and amazing power of God while he worked to bring the Israelites out of slavery. But Aaron did not stand up to this mob. Instead he became the artist who melted down all kinds of gold objects to make a sculpture of a golden calf.

Aaron pointed to the golden calf and proclaimed that this was the god who had brought them out of Egypt. Even with the Ten Commandments still fresh in the minds of the people, they held a festival to commemorate this image that could not see or hear.

The living God saw and heard what the people had done, and he told Moses that he was about to destroy them. But Moses stepped in between the faithful God and the faithless mob. Moses pleaded not on the basis of the people's actions but on the character of God—his faithful character and his covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This work of Moses as a mediator pointed ultimately to the work of Jesus, who paid with his own life for our salvation and also intercedes with God for us. We still need Jesus as our mediator today—and he never fails.

Lord, we are still prone to make idols rather than worship you. Forgive us, we pray. Thank you for giving us Jesus as our ultimate mediator. Amen.

A SIGN OF HEALING AND LIFE

Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.
—Numbers 21:9

Israel had a lot to learn about being the people of the holy and faithful God. In our story today the people grew impatient with God again as they traveled through the wilderness. They spoke against God and against Moses, saying, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?”

Sometimes the Lord was merciful when the people acted so rebelliously, but other times, when they had gone too far, the Lord sent punishment. This time the consequence for their actions was a plague of venomous snakes, and a number of the people died from snakebites.

What would happen next? How would salvation appear for these unfaithful people?

In what is a preview of the saving work of Christ, a bronze snake became an instrument

of healing and life. Moses made a bronze snake and lifted it up on a pole, and the people were told to look at this snake and live. Many years later Jesus explained that this miracle in the wilderness pointed to the gift of his own life for us all (being lifted up on a cross—John 3:14-15). Through this act of faith, we are freed from death!

In the coming week, as we focus on the time of Jesus’ suffering, death, and rising to life again, let’s remember that, like God’s people in the wilderness, we are lost without God’s faithfulness.

Lord, we can be so rebellious and stubborn in our resistance to you. Help us to look to you and believe in Jesus, who was lifted up for us. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD TO JESUS

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from . . . my cries of anguish? —Psalm 22:1

Let's be honest. Life can be hard. There are times when the only sounds we can make are silent cries and laments. And we may wonder, "Where is the faithful God who has promised to be with us?"

The Bible includes lots of texts that reflect the range of human experiences and emotions. At times we need to cry out to God. Sometimes we need to pour out our hearts and ask God, "What is going on?" and, "Where are you?"

Psalm 22 is a psalm of lament written by Israel's King David when he was distressed and alone. In this situation it seemed that God had abandoned him.

This psalm also points directly to Jesus and his experience. It opens with a key question—the same question Jesus asked on the cross (see Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). When we

read of Jesus being mocked and afflicted, stripped of his clothes and attacked from every side, we know that the God who inspired David as a psalmist certainly had Jesus' suffering in mind as well.

We also find that Jesus is the answer to all our wondering about pain and sorrow. He took on the pain and sorrow of the world so that he could bring us what we cannot gain for ourselves: full life forever with the God who is faithful.

Dear God, thank you for inviting us to cry out to you as children cry for their parents in times of trouble. In the pictures we see in this psalm, may we find encouragement that you are with us as you have promised—in Jesus. Amen.

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE AHEAD

Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced. . . . He is the LORD our God. . . .
—Psalm 105:5-7

We are people who forget. We need reminders, and we need to know that remembering can help us face the future.

Psalm 105 recites much of the Bible history we have covered so far this month. This psalm is designed to help God's people recount the past so that they will remember all that God has done for them.

Psalm 105 begins and ends with a call to praise. What is recounted is not just history but an opportunity to thank the living and faithful God for all he has done. God is always to be praised.

Tied to this is an opportunity to make the name of the Lord known among the nations (verse 1). This recalls the initial call and promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).

How can we make the name of God known among the na-

tions? The closing of this psalm calls us to "keep his precepts and observe his laws." We make God's name known by living in line with God's ways and forsaking our own selfish ways.

When we remember the stories of the faithful God and his wayward people, we are encouraged and challenged that the Lord always keeps his promises and will continue to do so for us.

That is who the Lord is!

Dear God, thank you for your faithful care for all the generations of your people. Help us to remember all you have done so that we may live by faith before you and make you known to the nations. In Jesus, Amen.

ONE GENERATION CALLS TO ANOTHER

One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.
—Psalm 145:4

In this month's devotions we have been looking back on what the Lord—the faithful God—has done. We are also approaching Holy Week, when we remember the finished work of Jesus Christ. He died to save us from sin and to give us new life with God forever. Psalm 145 can help us gain perspective in all this.

As I write these devotions, the seminary I serve has been preparing to mark its 150th anniversary of training Christian pastors and teachers. Throughout those years this school has held to the vision and mission of proclaiming the lordship of Christ over all creation.

While working on plans for this celebration, I have looked through lots of old pictures. In many old photos are the faces of people who had no idea what God would do through them so many years ago, but they had hopes. They hoped

that the God who had carried them so far would continue to carry the next generation, and so on. I am a witness to God's faithfulness through the generations, and, like those who served before me, I am called to commend God's works to the generations that follow. (The anniversary service will be livestreamed tomorrow, on Palm Sunday evening, and we will recall the Lord's works and commend them to the next generation.)

What pictures of faith do you carry with you? Remember. Tell. Give praise to our faithful God!

Dear God, may we join the chorus of praise from one generation to the next. You are indeed faithful to all your promises and loving toward all you have made. Amen.

A GENTLE KING

This took place to fulfill what was spoken . . . “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a . . . colt, the foal of a donkey.”
—Matthew 21:4-5

God reveals his faithfulness over time. We might not see it right away, for the Lord's ways are not our ways, and God works according to his own time table. Years before Jesus came riding into Jerusalem as King, God gave Zechariah the prophet an impression of that scene, and Zechariah proclaimed it and wrote it down (see Zechariah 9:9-11).

In this world, kings and rulers come in splendor and power, not on a donkey and with no army. From the beginning of history, though, God worked to prepare his people to understand that he wanted a relationship with them. And although they strayed and wandered in sin—again and again—God kept pursuing his people.

Our text today focuses on what has become known as Palm Sunday, the beginning of the week in which Jesus made

himself known as the world's Savior and King. But he didn't look like the king the people expected to see, and he was soon rejected, crucified, dead, and buried. But then he rose again the next Sunday morning, conquering death for our sake! Once again, the faithful one, God, did more than anyone could think or imagine.

Even the people closest to Jesus did not see what was unfolding. The key to this puzzle was that Jesus would not be deterred from his mission to save us. He took on the curse of death for all in order to bring life to all who believe.

God, thank you for preparing through the years for Jesus to come. Remind us this week of the wonder of your unchanging faithfulness. Amen.

COMMOTION AT THE TEMPLE

Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. —Matthew 21:12

Jesus entered Jerusalem and was cheered as a king—but not for long.

In the next scene, Jesus went to the temple courts in Jerusalem. And as he looked around, he became upset. As Isaiah the prophet had noted many years earlier, the temple of the Lord was to be “a house of prayer” (Isaiah 56:7). God wanted it to be a place where people could connect with him. The temple area was not meant to become a marketplace for selling animals and exchanging currency. So Jesus overturned the tables and benches there and drove the merchants out.

Continuing in his ministry of drawing people to the Lord, Jesus healed people who came to him at the temple. Some were blind, and others could not walk, and he healed them.

The temple authorities, however, did not like any of this.

They complained about the disruption and the children shouting “Hosanna” in the temple courts, and they asked Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?”

“Yes,” he said, and he asked if they knew the words of the psalm that said, “From the lips of children and infants, you, Lord, have called forth your praise” (see Psalm 8:2).

But the religious leaders did not have the eyes of faith to see Jesus for who he was. Before long, they were plotting to kill him, and in a few days they stirred up the people and had them shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Faithful God, help us to see Jesus for who he truly is—the fulfillment of all your promises. Thank you for your grace. Amen.

THE PROPHET'S CHALLENGE

"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."
—Matthew 21:22

God shows his faithfulness by responding to the prayers of his people.

In our reading today, a fig tree that does not bear fruit receives judgment from Jesus. The religious leaders ask Jesus about his authority, and he makes them uncomfortable by reminding them of the work of John the Baptist, a prophet who called everyone to repent (Matthew 3). A prophet is someone called by God to guide, comfort, and challenge people to follow the ways of God. John pointed people to Jesus by preparing them to receive him as the promised Savior, and Jesus pointed people to himself as the way to find full, eternal life with God.

In the remainder of this week in which Jesus would give up his life for us, we see Jesus at work in the final hours of his ministry, teaching his disciples and urging everyone, including

the religious leaders, to look inside their hearts, to repent, and to ask the faithful God for forgiveness. It's the only way to find the life that God wants everyone to enjoy.

Jesus' interaction with the fig tree is a kind of object lesson showing that he wants the religious leaders to bear fruit as they are called to do—that is, pointing God's people to repentance and faith rather than being concerned about their own authority and status.

Jesus invites everyone to have faith. The gift of faith is for all who believe.

Believe, receive, and live!

Lord Jesus, fill us with faith in you. May we be your witnesses and bear fruit because we are rooted in you. In your name we pray. Amen.

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