

A Lenten Journey

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This is Your Life: A Lenten Journey

This Lenten journey, which I have titled, "This is your Life", is an opportunity for us to be intentionally and prayerfully thoughtful about who we are and how we became the person we are today. The title is taken from the TV show that aired its last episode before I was ten years old. I remember the show and how enjoyable it was to watch a celebrity revisit their past. It always made a star seem more human to know more about their past and the people and experiences that shaped them. This version will not include visits from people in your past, however. Instead, we will do the work of visiting ourselves, so to speak, over the next six weeks.

I was also put in mind of the movie Forrest Gump, which starts and ends with a floating white feather, carried here and there on the breeze. While fictional, that movie captures a lifetime through a series of events, many of them which seem insignificant or random at the time. The irony of the film, and perhaps our lives, is that when viewed in the rearview mirror, we can see amazing things that we missed in the moment. We can also see how things connect through our lives. It may feel like our own life is a series of small unrelated events as we've been blown about through life, and yet I suspect this Lenten experience will prove otherwise.

As we take this journey we start by remembering our childhood and several aspects of those years. After that first week we will look at other features of our lives, but not necessarily in chronological order. We'll jump around our memories a bit to look at areas of our life such as our relationships, our vocation and work, our role as servant and steward, what we've learned through the School of Hard Knocks, and the legacy we hope to leave behind when we die. We'll also be on the lookout for how and where God fits into our story. Each day will have a scripture passage, a question or questions for reflection, and a prayer prompt based on that week's theme. Keeping notes in this booklet might prove helpful, it's not required.

We will also gather weekly to explore each of the themes a bit, through guided conversation and sharing stories. No one will be asked to share something they are uncomfortable sharing. Each week the session will cover the chapter of the journey we just spent the week reflecting on.

I hope that most of the things we recall from our past are positive, or at least neutral, as in the case of things that might have been difficult but are no longer challenging. I am aware, however, that when we reach back in time, we can also uncover things that are still painful and possibly unresolved. If at any time you find yourself feeling intense emotion that you aren't able to manage readily, please reach out to someone on our clergy team or to a trusted counselor that you may already have a relationship with. This is not intended to be a painful process; I pray it will be helpful and joyful by the time we are through.

Remembering where we've been helps us know where we're going. It also helps us find meaning and purpose for who we are today and what God calls us to do. No matter how

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many years of formal education we've had we are all students, learning and growing as we go through life, sometimes despite our best attempts not to do so! It's also true that we have not traveled this road alone. Our life has been filled with people from our first hours until now. Perhaps most importantly, God has been along on the journey from the start, too. The start is the natural place for any journey to begin, so it's to our own beginning that we turn now.

Thank you for taking this journey with me.

Tom+

Lent, 2020



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Ash Wednesday:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

Thinking back to your childhood, what memories bring you the most joy? Who are the people associated with those memories?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for the joyful memories and the people associated with them.

Thursday:

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32

As you consider your childhood, what were your greatest fears? Who did you talk to about those fears?

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Prayer Prompt: Ask God to give you courage for the things you are afraid of now.

Friday:

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. *John 12:3*

Are there any smells that take you back to your childhood? What are they, and where do they take you in your mind?

Thank God for a moment you remember.



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<u>Saturday:</u>

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. *Ephesians 4: 14-16*

Are there things you simply didn't know as a child that you wish you did? Or are there things you learned later that you're grateful you didn't have to deal with at the time?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for the gift of ignorance when we were young and for those who gave it to us.

Lent 1 - Sunday:

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray. Proverbs 22:6

What was school like for you? What did you like, and who were your favorite teachers? What do you wish you could have skipped?

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Prayer Prompt: Pray for teachers today who are doing the work of teaching today's children.

Monday:

For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. *1 Corinthians 13: 9-11*

As a child, did you have a sense of what you wanted to be when you grew up, or what you wanted your life to be like? What was it you envisioned?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for the ability to dream and pursue those dreams.

Tuesday:

But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come

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to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." *Mark 10:14-15*

Where was God in your childhood? Did you go to church, or not? Who taught you the faith? What questions did you have? What can you remember that shaped your faith, even to this day?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for being present in your life, even when you weren't aware.

Additional Notes:



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Wednesday:

A friend loves at all times, and kinsfolk are born to share adversity. *Proverbs 17:17*

Thinking back to your childhood, before you were a teenager, who were the most important people in your life?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for the important people in your life. Pray for those to whom you are an important person.

Thursday:

He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. *Matthew* 18:2-4

What was your relationship to your parents like as a child? How did those relationships change as you became an adult? Or when you became a parent?

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Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for your parents and those who raised you.

Friday:

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

What were your friendships like as a child, a teenager, a young adult, in middle age, now? Who were your best friends?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for your friendships over the years.

Saturday:

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm. *Proverbs* 13:20

Have you had people who mentored you and guided you? What gifts have they shared with you that you still treasure?



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Prayer Prompt: Pray for all those who need mentoring, that they might find what they need.

<u>Lent 2 - Sunday:</u>

Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. Job 2:11

Think about your spouse or dearest friend; can you imagine life without them? If they are already with God, how do you honor their memory even now? If they were with you in this moment, what would you thank them for?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for moments when friendships sustained you.

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Monday:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" this is the first commandment with a promise: "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." *Matthew* 25:23-24

Thinking back on your life, what relationships have you had that needed or need forgiveness, reconciliation, or healing? Is it still possible to give and/or receive these things? How might you go about doing that, even if they aren't alive?

Prayer Prompt: Ask for God's forgiveness for your actions or mistakes that have hurt others.

Tuesday:

...even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. *Isaiah 46:4*

What was your relationship to God like in childhood, young adulthood, middle age, and now? How do you foster that relationship?



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Prayer Prompt: Ask God for what you need today.

Additional Notes:





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Wednesday:

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." Mark 1:17

Thinking back to your childhood, what did your parent(s) do for work? What was their vocation, and what did you learn from watching them?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for lessons you learned about hard work.

Thursday:

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands— O prosper the work of our hands! *Psalm 90:17*

What is your earliest memory of work at home? What was your first job? Remember the details of who, what, where, and what you were paid. What does it make you think or feel all these years later?

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Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for chores that taught you responsibility, and ask forgiveness for times you gave your parents a hard time or grieved your first boss.

Friday:

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. *Exodus 20:8-11*

Sabbath-keeping is largely gone from our culture. Over the course of your life, what do you remember about Sundays and days off? Did you always balance work and time off the way you learned from earlier generations? How do you balance it now?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for rest and ask God's help for keeping sabbath.



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Saturday:

However, that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. *1 Corinthians 7:17*

Has your life had a vocation? More than one? How do you think of a vocation as separate from a job?

Prayer Prompt: Talk to God about your vocation and how you've lived into it.

Lent 3 - Sunday:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters... *Colossians 3:23*

What gifts do you have that made you successful at the work you have done? Is there a skill or a gift you always wanted and never felt you mastered?



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Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for the gifts you have been blessed with.

Monday:

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. *Romans 12:4-8*

How did your gifts and skills play out in hobbies and past times? What things have you always done, and what things developed over time?

Prayer Prompt: Prayer for the health and ability to continue to use your gifts.

Tuesday:

I can do all things through him who gives me strength. Phillipians 4:13

How has God played a role in your working life? Was God active in calling you to a vocation? Is God still calling you to action?

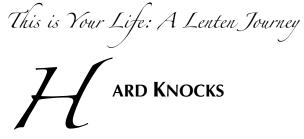
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Prayer Prompt: Thank God for being a part of your active life of work and hobby.

Additional Notes:







Wednesday:

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the lawand the prophets. Matthew 7:12

Often our parents and grandparents taught us adages about life. What are the adages you remember learning early on?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for the gift of wisdom we have received.

Thursday:

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

"If I'd have known then what I know now ... " What fits into this category in your life?

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Prayer Prompt: Ask God to help you make the most of what today has to offer without regret for yesterday.

Friday:

Show me how you work, God; School me in your ways. (The Message) *Psalm 25:4*

What were hardest the things you learned without anyone telling you about? Was it in regard to relationships, parenting, yourself?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for God's support and care during your life, especially at times when you otherwise thought you were alone.

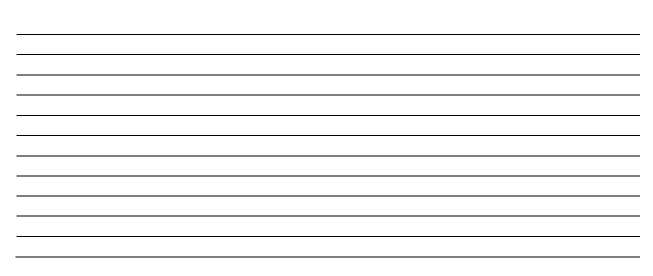
Saturday:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9



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What have been the hardest moments in your life to live through? Why were they hard? How did they shape you? As you remember them, is there anything you can give thanks for?



Prayer Prompt: Ask God to help you lay down burdens you may have been carrying for a long time.

Lent 4 - Sunday:

Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:23-26

Losing loved ones is probably the hardest thing we have to deal with in life. What deaths have been the hardest for you?



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Prayer Prompt: Rejoice for the gift of life that our loved ones who have gone before us are already experiencing in God's embrace.

<u>Monday:</u>

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." *Revelation 21:5*

Are there moments in your life you wish you could do over? Have you come to a place of peace with such moments? If not, can you?

Prayer Prompt: Ask God to help with moving forward instead of looking backwards.

Tuesday:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans* 8:38-39

How has God been present in difficult times and challenges? How did you manage your faith in those times, and how does it still affect you and your relationship to God?

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Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for light in dark places, and God's never-failing love.

Additional Notes:





Wednesday:

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:10-11

When did you first learn about serving others and giving back without expectation of reward?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for those who taught you generosity and selflessness.

Thursday:

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:2-4

When did you first learn about financial stewardship as a spiritual practice? Giving back to church and/or giving to efforts that help others? Who taught you?

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Prayer Prompt: Pray for guidance on how to be a good steward of the treasure you have been blessed with.

<u>Friday:</u>

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. *Matthew 7:7*

Which has been easier for you in life; to ask others for help, or to be the one helping? Why do you think that is?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for those who have helped you and pray for the humility to ask for help when you need it.



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Saturday:

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

What moment(s) in your life stand out as moments of blessing? What moments have been the most joyful? How did/do you give thanks for those moments?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for blessings!

Lent 5 – Sunday:

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' *Matthew 25:21*

How have you served and been a good steward of what God has given you? Has it come naturally and been easy, or has it been hard? Has it felt natural? Has it felt good to help others?



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Prayer Prompt: Ask for help to be generous, particularly when you don't want to, or when it's hard to help a particular person/institution/etc.

Monday:

And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' *Matthew 25:40*

When have you been the recipient of God's love through someone else's support, care, action, or generosity? Did you perceive it as God's work at the time? How did you become aware of the connection between the two?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks for those who have been God's arms of embrace to you, and ask for help to offer the same to others who need God's love.

Tuesday:

The earth and everything that is in it, the world and it's inhabitants, belong to the Lord. *Psalm 24:1*

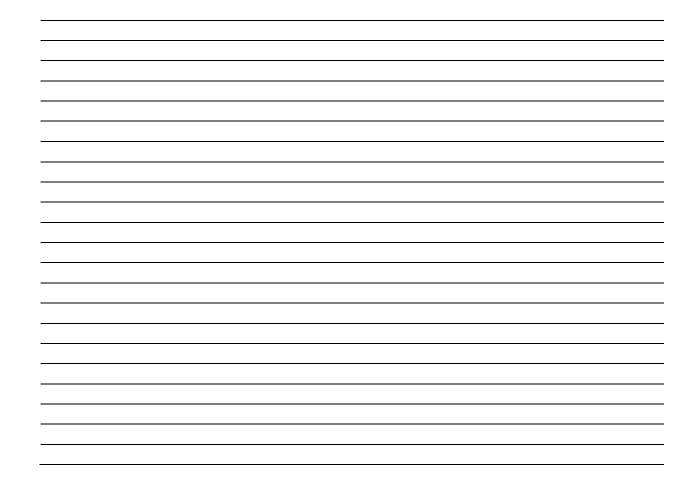
How aware are you of the connection between your blessings and the invitation to share those blessings with others? Is God calling you to do or give more?



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Prayer Prompt: Ask for the Spirit to guide you in your service to others.

Additional Notes:





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Wednesday:

Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain in learning. *Proverbs* 9:9

We are all mentored by someone. Who have you mentored? What lessons, insights, or ethics have you worked hard to instill in others?

Prayer Prompt: Pray for those who you feel some responsibility for; those who you work to lift up and lead in some way.

Thursday:

I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth. *3 John 4*

What do you want people to remember about you when you are gone? Is it different from what you think they will remember you for?

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Prayer Prompt: Ask God to give you humility and an honest heart as you acknowledge your life.

Friday:

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. *Matthew 5:14-16*

In what ways have you changed the world by being you? Who or what have you shaped over the course of your life?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks to God for the good work you were able to join with God in accomplishing.

Saturday:

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' *Matthew 25:23*

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What are you most proud of? Is it an achievement, a relationship, a personal revelation? Why are you proud of it?

Prayer Prompt: Ask God for humility as you give credit to God for your achievements.

Palm Sunday:

Therefore I intend to keep on reminding you of these things, though you know them already and are established in the truth that has come to you. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to refresh your memory, since I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. *2 Peter 1:12-15*

We all have a story to tell. Who needs, or who do you want to hear yours? How will you tell them?



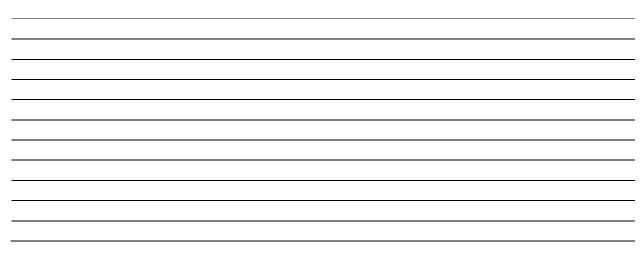
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Prayer Prompt: Ask God to give you the voice to share what is most important with those who most need to hear it.

Monday:

Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." Luke 23:43

In a Christmas Carol, Ebenezer Scrooge demonstrates that it's never too late to make a positive difference or an even greater impact. With however many chapters remain in your life, how can you leave a legacy, or a greater one, for those who come after you?



Prayer Prompt: Ask for God's help in making the most of each day.

Tuesday:

And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. *1 Corinthians 13:13*

How does your legacy fit in with God's legacy and God's mission? Is there a way to align the two? How?

Prayer Prompt: Ask God to help you live in and through love each day.

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Wednesday:

You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11

How much of this journey has brought you joy? What have you remembered that brings you joy?

Prayer Prompt: Give thanks to God today for those things that have brought you joy in this season.

Thursday:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29

What has this process brought up that has been painful? What has brought grief, guilt, or distress? Can you let go of those things and find healing? Thank God for forgiveness and fresh starts.



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Prayer Prompt: Thank God for God's never-failing love.

Friday:

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. *Matthew 28:20*

Where has God met you in this journey through your life? In the joy and/or the grief - what word has God shared with you? What is your response?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for being with you. Ask God to help you be more aware of God's presence on a daily basis.



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Saturday:

Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. *Joel 1:3*

If you were creating a highlight reel of the story of your life, what things make the cut? What would you share with your family, with your friends, in your obituary? (Consider setting a goal of writing down the things that are most important and making sure they are shared with those who you want to read them.)

Prayer Prompt: Ask for the Spirit to move and through your process of remembering and sharing.

Easter Sunday:

O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. *Psalm 95:1-3*

Today is a day of joy and life. No matter what our life has included, it has been full of blessing, full of growth, and we have much to be thankful for. Resurrection is not just about the future, but about being fully alive today. Remembering where we've been, who has crossed our path, and what we've learned, how can we honor the life we've lived and the God who has given us life? How will you live and "be alive"?



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Prayer Prompt: Rejoice for the journey that has been your life and the journey of these last weeks. Rejoice with God that death has no power, and that through Jesus all things, even you, are being made new.

