



# GPS GUIDE: AUGUST 22, 2021

## Grow. Pray. Study

### **Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

#### **Joshua 24: 1-2a, 14-18**

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders of Israel, its leaders, judges, and officers. They presented themselves before God.

Then Joshua said to the entire people, "So now, revere the Lord. Serve him honestly and faithfully. Put aside the gods that your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt and serve the Lord. But if it seems wrong in your opinion to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Choose the gods whom your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But my family and I will serve the Lord." Then the people answered, "God forbid that we ever leave the Lord to serve other gods! The Lord is our God. He is the one who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. He has done these mighty signs in our sight. He has protected us the whole way we've gone and in all the nations through which we've passed. The Lord has driven out all the nations before us, including the Amorites who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God."

#### **Monday: Read Matthew 1: 18-25 and Luke 1: 26-38**

Our culture puts a lot of stock in credentials. If we hire someone for a job, we want to know they're capable of doing the work. The more titles, diplomas, and achievements a person has, the more we're inclined to trust them. But God has a way of turning our methods of operation upside-down. Mary and Joseph were unlikely candidates to parent the Messiah. A poor couple from the wrong side of the tracks. Yet they each responded to God's call with faith. When have you found yourself called to do a task for which you felt unprepared? How did you respond? Does the story of Mary and Joseph strengthen your faith that God can use you in powerful ways?

*Prayer: God, make me ready and willing to say "yes" when you call on me. Amen.*

**Tuesday: Read Luke 22: 54-62**

Peter; Simon; The Rock; The one on whom Jesus would build his church. This is the same Peter we find in the courtyard on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion. Though he sat in the darkness, the firelight made his face recognizable enough. He was caught. Three times identified as one of Jesus' followers. Three times Peter denied it. Fred Craddock says the story is clear - he was tested, and he failed. Then, just as the cock crowed Jesus turned and looked at Peter. That look triggered his memories of Jesus' promise and prediction and he was immediately overcome with remorse. It was the first step on the path to repentance and restoration. We don't know just how the restoration took place, yet Luke verifies it in his writing when it is Peter who delivers the Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:14). Following Jesus is difficult! Sometimes we fail. We forget our promises to stand firm. We lurk in the shadow hoping someone else will be identified as a disciple instead of us. Jesus did not give up on Peter. He will not give up on us either! When have you found it difficult to stay with Jesus? Have there been times you've hidden your faith? How do you move toward restoration after falling short? Know that Jesus looks upon you with love and confidence that you are a worthy disciple.

*Prayer: Thank you for not giving up on me when I fail to follow you. Strengthen me to go where you send me. Amen.*

**Wednesday: Read John 20: 11-18**

Disciples scholar Lisa Davison testifies, "The text seems so clear; a woman was sent by the risen Jesus to preach the good news to his male disciples. While he could have appeared to Simon Peter and/or the other male disciple who came to the tomb, he chose instead to grant this experience to a woman. Mary Magdalene's important role at the beginning of the Christian movement was too important to leave out of this story. While it takes a direct appearance of the risen Jesus to fully convince the male disciples, a woman gave the first testimony to what became the key celebration of Easter." When have you heard the good news preached from someone whom you least expected to hear it? Did you first believe it? What made it hard to believe? What cultural/social norms might we need to break free from in order to hear the good news of the Gospel?

*Prayer: Lord, open my ears to hear your good news, and my heart to receive it. Amen.*

**Wednesday: Read Genesis 21: 1-7 and 1Timothy 4: 12-16**

Too often people say, "I'm too old to do that." or "They're too young to make a difference." These readings stand as witnesses that God's work has no age limit. Timothy was not too young to bring a prophetic word from God. Abraham and Sarah were not too old to start a great nation. Do you have an excuse ready when God calls you? It doesn't matter who you are or what your age - God can use you to make a difference in this world. God isn't looking for people with lots of money, or jaw dropping good looks, or the proper education. God is looking

for ordinary people, of all ages, willing to put their trust in God. Have you ever considered yourself too old/young for a ministry role in the church? Is there a better way in which the church can discern ministry roles than a person's age or experience? What ministry might God be calling you to right now? At this age?

*Prayer: Lord, lead me, right now, to do ministry in your name. Amen.*

**Thursday: Read Exodus 4:1-17**

Moses was a prince of Egypt, but he was also a murderer. After having killed an Egyptian (Exodus 2:12), he fled to Midian. When he is hiding out, God calls him into service. We often think of Moses as being a formidable character (thanks to Cecil B. DeMille). Yet Moses pleads with God not to send him to Egypt; finally admitting he lacks self-confidence due to a speech impediment. When he admits his need, God provides. Aaron will be his aid and work with him to accomplish God's mission of freeing the Israelites from slavery. Too often we think we must go it alone. This passage reminds us that in ministry we are called to work together to accomplish God's mission. How often do you doubt your ability to do something challenging for God? What makes you lack self-confidence? Who has been your helper, partner, mentor in the faith?

*Prayer: Use me, in my imperfection, to accomplish your mission, O God. Amen.*

**Friday: Read Luke 1: 26-45**

Elizabeth is a trusted revealer of God's good work! Mary sets out "with haste" for Elizabeth's house. Something compels her to go. Perhaps it's to share this moment with Elizabeth, to marvel at the holy bizarreness of it all. Perhaps it's the scariness of Mary's own situation. Whatever the motivation, Mary arrives, and the words of greeting are barely out of her mouth before Elizabeth is shouting with utter delight, saying: Blessed are you among women! Blessed is the child that you carry. Blessed are you, who believed. In these words of blessing, Elizabeth testifies that yes, Mary's whole life is about to change, but what does not change, what cannot change, what will not change, is God's goodness and mercy. God's steadfast love endures forever, it endures any circumstance of life that might befall us. Certainly Mary, as she prepared to become a wife and a mother simultaneously, needed that blessing - she needed to hear those words, that "good God" news. Have you ever faced a time when you needed to hear some "good God" news from a trusted source? Who do you trust to reveal/confirm/assure you of God's work in your life? Of God's steadfast love for you? Of God's unfailing mercy? Who might need to hear some "good God" news from you this week?

*Prayer: Thank you, O God, for trusted friends who speak of your goodness in our lives. Amen.*

**Saturday: Read Luke 2: 22-38**

In chapters 1 and 2 of his gospel, Luke introduces a trio of life-giving women: Elizabeth the faithful one, Mary who carries the one who is the Good News, and

Anna the prophet who heralds him to all Israel. Anna is the only woman in the gospels to be called a prophet. She personifies the long history of an expectant people, those who have looked for the fulfillment of God's promise. She is an evangelist - the first to proclaim Jesus as the one through whom Jerusalem's redemption would come. Though none of Anna's words are directly relayed to us, we can understand, through her life-long devotion to the Temple, her steadfast prayers, and her praise for God's redemptive work, that she was a woman of deep faith and respect. How do you view Anna? Who first proclaimed Jesus to you?

*Prayer: God, help me proclaim Jesus, as the prophet Anna did, with faith and wisdom. Amen.*



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