

2020 SUMMER DEVOTIONAL

First Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC
fpcgreensboro.org

Week seven



I am the Way,
and the Truth,
and the Life

WEEK SEVEN
—
DAY ONE

Scripture & reflection

John 14:
1-7

“I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me.” I’ve heard sermons using this scripture to judge others, “If you don’t believe in Jesus Christ, you are going to.....” (well, you know where.) Too often this scripture is used as a weapon to hit non-Christians over the head rather than as a mirror to see how it applies to me. Rather than thinking of this scripture in exclusionary ways, what if we heard this scripture is an invitation? An invitation to know God.

Jesus is inviting us to know God by knowing Jesus and his ministry – which was radically inclusive. For me, the point of the text is Jesus’s words in the last verse: “If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Or, in modern vernacular, “Don’t you get it? If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen God. God dwells in me and God can dwell in you, too.”

You’ve probably heard before one of my husband Tim’s favorite jokes (being raised in a very conservative Church of Christ Church in Tennessee). A Presbyterian woman dies and goes to Heaven. St. Peter meets her at the gate to show her around. When the Presbyterian sees a room with people dancing, she asks, “Who are they?” St. Peter replies, “Oh, that’s the Methodists.” St. Peter shows the Presbyterian woman a room filled with people playing cards and drinking.” She asks, “Who are they?” St. Peter replies, “That is the Presbyterians.” Then St. Peter shows the woman a room with high fortress walls around it. Horrified, the Presbyterian says, “St. Peter, why are there walls in heaven?” St. Peter says, “Shhhhh...that’s the Church of Christ, they don’t think anyone else is up here.”

What does God’s Kingdom, a “house with many rooms,” look like? Could it be that this “house of many rooms” not only includes Presbyterians and Methodists and Church of Christ but also Jewish and Muslim and Unitarian Universalists? Could it be that there is a room for every person in whom God dwells? I believe that Jesus’s invitation, which we all too often see as an exclusion, is about something greater than just me and my beliefs.

I have a bumper sticker that says, “There is more than one path up the mountain.” What do you think? In whom do you see God dwelling? How does God dwell in you?

— Rev. Maria Hanlin



John 14:6

“Jesus said to

Thomas, ‘I am

the way and the
truth and the life.

No one comes to
the Father except
through me.’”

This painting, entitled “Snow across Path,” is by Norwegian artist Eva Margot, and depicts a landscape in the Mosby area of Norway.

Take in the painting image, slowly moving your eyes over the it. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present with you in this exercise of visual devotion.

What do you notice when you look at the painting? What first stands out to you?

How do the colors and shapes in the painting make you feel? Does your eye gravitate towards a particular color or area of the painting?

Read today’s scripture verse. Do you experience any resonances between the scripture and the image?

Pause. Breathe. Take in the image once more. Close your devotion time with a prayer, offering to God the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession that are on your heart this day.

WEEK SEVEN
DAY TWO

Visio divina

WEEK SEVEN
DAY THREE

Spiritual practice

Examen

For this year's summer devotional, each week will include an invitation to a spiritual practice. We know that our faith deepens and broadens when we engage embodied practices that form us as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. We invite you this week into the practice of Examen.

This practice finds its origin in the work of Ignatius Loyola, a 16th century Spanish priest whose writings on spirituality and prayer have significantly influenced Christian understandings of spiritual practices through the centuries. The purpose of Examen is to prayerfully reflect on the events of the past day in order to discern God's presence and direction for our lives. Below is a guided exercise that will lead you in this practice, but you might expand these reflection questions as you find them speaking to your own experience and practice of dwelling in the Spirit's presence.

At the end of the day, find a comfortable place to sit in silence. Notice the pace of your breathing, and work to slow its pace. Begin to notice God's presence within this space, trusting that the Spirit is moving.

Recall the events of your past day. What comes to mind as you think about what happened today? For what and for whom can you give thanks?

Notice the emotions that are becoming present to you in this moment. How are you feeling in your body? How are you feeling? Name these experiences before God.

Choose one experience or feature of the past day to pray about. Offer to God your feelings and experience, and allow this experience to lead you into intercessory prayer.

As you prepare to move into a time of rest, pray for God's guidance and presence in the upcoming day.