



Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

## Sacrament

January 2–8, 2023



from the **Golden Text**

[James 4:10](#)

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

Tradition identifies the author of this letter as a brother of Christ Jesus. Although he apparently didn't become a Christian until after Jesus' ascension, James soon emerged as a respected leader in the early Church.

At the time of this epistle, fellow apostle Stephen had recently been martyred, and Christians had fled or been driven from Jerusalem. In this period of upheaval, James advocates humility and faithfulness to God's law.

from the **Responsive Reading**

[1 Peter 5:2, 4–6, 10, 11](#)

*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; . . . And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. . . . And be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: . . . The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.*

In detailed counsel to elders in the Christian community, the writer of First Peter urges the pastoral care typical of a shepherd for his sheep. “Elders are to exercise their leadership,” a commentator reflects, “with the same selflessness that characterized Christ’s own life. . . .”

Another scholar observes: “Humility is ultimately not a matter of our relationships to one another, but of our stance before God. Under God’s mighty hand no one can stand on his or her own power or boast in his or her credentials.”

## from **Section 1**

### 1 | [Psalms 69:13, 30, 32](#)

*My prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. . . . I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. . . . The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.*

#### **Translation**

*My prayer reaches you, LORD,  
at just the right time.  
God, in your great and faithful love,  
answer me with your certain salvation! . . .*

*I will praise God’s name with song;  
I will magnify him with thanks. . . .  
Let the afflicted see it and be glad!  
You who seek God—  
let your hearts beat strong again . . .*

—Common English Bible

### 2 | [Psalms 24:1, 3–5](#)

*The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. . . . Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

#### **Translation**

*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it.*

*The world and all its people belong to him.*

*Who may climb the mountain of the LORD?*

*Who may stand in his holy place?*

*Only those whose hands and hearts are pure,*

*who do not worship idols*

*and never tell lies.*

*They will receive the LORD's blessing*

*and have a right relationship with God their savior.*

—New Living Translation

### 3 | II Timothy 1:7, 9, 10

*God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. . . . Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

#### **Translation**

*For the Spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, his Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control. . . . He saved us and called us to be his own people, not because of what we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. He gave us this grace by means of Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but now it has been revealed to us through the coming of our Savior, Christ Jesus. He has ended the power of death and through the gospel has revealed immortal life.*

—Good News Translation

To both Jews and Christians, a “call” was typically a summons by God for someone to perform a certain function or job—for instance, to become a prophet or apostle. Similar to a court summons today, a call required a response. One source notes: “Those who love God are in fact those who are the called by God. Our love is our response to the work of the Holy Spirit in us.”

Being called is closely related to the concept of election, the doctrine that God’s people are chosen by Him. “Mine elect,” the book of Isaiah declares, “shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (65:22). In the New Testament, believers are commonly referred to as “the elect” (see example in [Colossians 3:12](#)). Second Peter charges, “Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (1:10).

## from Section 2

### 4 | [Matthew 4:17, 24](#)

*Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*

#### Translation

*Jesus began to preach, saying, “Change your hearts and lives, because the kingdom of heaven is coming soon.” . . . and people brought all the sick to him. These sick people were suffering from different kinds of diseases and pain. Some were suffering very great pain, some had demons, some were epileptics, and some were paralyzed. Jesus healed all of them.*

—International Children’s Bible®

### 5 | [Matthew 15:21–28](#)

*Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

Jesus’ visit to “the coasts of Tyre and Sidon” represents one of just a few instances in which he ventures outside Jewish territory. His assertion about being sent only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” underscores his Hebrew-centered mission (see also [10:5, 6](#)). After testing her faith, however, the Savior is willing to help this Gentile woman. Scholars view this episode as foreshadowing the ultimate reach of Christianity beyond Israel.

### 6 | [Matthew 5:5, 6](#)

*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

## Translation

*“Blessed [inwardly peaceful, spiritually secure, worthy of respect] are the gentle [the kind-hearted, the sweet-spirited, the self-controlled], for they will inherit the earth. “Blessed [joyful, nourished by God’s goodness] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [those who actively seek right standing with God], for they will be [completely] satisfied.”*

—Amplified® Bible

In Scripture, meekness isn’t weak. *Meek* is translated from the Greek term *praos*, characterized by one Bible authority as “strength in gentleness.” And Christ Jesus describes himself as “meek [*praos*] and lowly in heart” ([Matthew 11:29](#)).

Hunger and thirst were daily issues for many people of this time. As wages for the average Palestinian were very low, a worker might be able to afford to eat meat only once a week. And water was an ongoing need in arid regions. Verse 6 portrays a compelling and consistent search for righteousness, just as one regularly seeks food and water.

A commentary suggests: “. . . this beatitude is in reality a question and a challenge. In effect it demands, ‘How much do you want goodness? Do you want it as much as a starving man wants food, and as much as a man dying of thirst wants water?’ How intense is our desire for goodness?”

## from Section 3

### 7 | [John 13:1](#)

*Before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

“Unto the end” has been interpreted in two ways—to the end of Jesus’ earthly life and to the fullest degree. A scholar explains, “The Fourth Evangelist probably intended both meanings to be heard here, because it was in loving his own ‘to the end’ that the ‘full extent’ of Jesus’ love is revealed.”

### 8 | [Luke 22:14, 19, 20, 26](#)

*When the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. . . . And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. . . . He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

At this meal Jesus observes Hebrew custom. Bread and wine were integral to the Passover celebration; the sacrificial lamb traditional to the feast prefigured Jesus in his crucifixion.

After the Savior's ascension, breaking bread became a precious symbol of fellowship for his followers. The two disciples who saw Jesus as they journeyed to Emmaus, for instance, reported that "he was known of them in breaking of bread" ([Luke 24:35](#)). This simple act was a key element of early Christianity, serving to commemorate the Master's last meal before the crucifixion and to forge bonds of brotherhood (see examples in [Acts 2:46](#); [20:7](#)).

## 9 | [John 13:3–5, 12–14, 34](#)

*Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. . . . So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. . . . A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.*

Foot washing was common in desert areas, where mainly sandals were worn. In homes of modest means, guests were furnished with water to clean their own feet. Wealthier hosts provided slaves to perform this menial task.

Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet is an unquestionable expression of meekness and love—as their Master, he could have demanded this service of them. A scriptural authority remarks: "God's love for the world in sending Jesus ([3:16](#)) is here enacted in Jesus' love for his own. . . . The foot washing removes the possibility of distance between Jesus and his followers, and brings them face to face with the love of God for them."

## from **Section 4**

## 10 | [Luke 22:39–48](#)

*[Jesus] came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*

Prayer was central to Jesus' life and work, as evidenced in the many occasions when he prayed or taught about prayer (see examples in [3:21](#); [5:16](#); [6:12](#); [9:18, 28, 29](#); [11:1–4](#)).

Now, before making his own fervent petition to God, he charges his closest friends to resist temptation through prayer.

The Greek term rendered *temptation* (*peirasmos*) can also signify trial or proving. First Peter employs the word this way: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try [*peirasmos*] you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice . . . that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (4:12, 13).

In the Mediterranean world, kisses are frequent greetings among family members and friends. (In [Luke 7:45](#), Jesus chides his host for neglecting to greet him with a kiss.) Judas uses this greeting to initiate a staggering betrayal, unwittingly setting in motion the final stages of Jesus’ earthly mission.

## from **Section 5**

11 | [Mark 15:1, 25, 38](#)

*Straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. . . . And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. . . . And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

The Temple veil covered the entrance to the inner sanctuary. This sacred space—designed to house the ark of the covenant and accessible only to the high priest—served as both literal and figurative separation between Jewish worshipers and the presence, or Shekinah, of their God. Some sources see the tearing of the veil as a proclamation that barriers between God and His children have been destroyed.

Extremely thick and heavy, this curtain was enormous, thought to have been about sixty feet high. The top-to-bottom nature of the tear—and the sheer size of the veil—made it impossible to attribute this event to human desecration.

## from **Section 6**

13 | [Psalms 30:1](#)

*I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.*

### **Translation**

*I will praise you, LORD,  
because you rescued me.  
You did not let my enemies laugh at me.*

—New Century Version®

14 | [John 21:1, 3–6, 9, 12](#)



*After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. . . . Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. . . . But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. . . . As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. . . . Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.*

In his final talk with his disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus had predicted that they would be “scattered, every man to his own” (16:32). And indeed, after visiting the empty sepulcher, they returned to their homes (see 20:1–10)—and now, to their former occupation. “The third appearance of the risen Jesus,” a Bible expert reflects, “. . . brings the disciples from being scattered to their homes in Galilee into full involvement in the mission to which they are called, and so back into . . . fellowship with Jesus and each other. . . .”

## 15 | Acts 5:12, 14

*By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; . . . And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.*

At this time Christian works were largely a public phenomenon. Although often victimized, the apostles and other believers continued to gather openly—a commitment that ensured the spread of the gospel and growth of the Church. In this instance, a meeting takes place in Solomon’s porch, a colonnade in the outer court of the Temple.

Verse 14 is one of the first New Testament mentions of women as a distinct group. While most Christian writers take very little note of women in the Church, Luke repeatedly speaks of them (in both his Gospel and the book of Acts) as fellow adherents with the men who were baptized and persecuted for their faith. He refers, for example, to devout, chief, and honorable women (Acts 13:50; 17:4, 12).

## 16 | II Corinthians 13:14

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*

### Translation

*May God bless you with his love, and may the Holy Spirit join all your hearts together.*

—Contemporary English Version

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