



We Are Healed

DEVOTIONAL FOR LENT

SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH
The Beloved Community

**LIBERATION
LECTIONARY**

FATH FOR JUSTICE

We Are Healed

ISAIAH 53:5

Welcome to the Lenten devotional of the Liberation Lectionary: A Black Liberation Worship resource for Progressive Christian communities.

This six week devotional has one entry per week, for the first week of Lent through Holy Week. Learners are invited each week into a story of healing from the Bible, and a story of healing from Black liberation history. Intentionally designed for growing minds and group discussions to center God's promises of well-being for everything and everyone. God's message to us through the gospel of Jesus is this: everything that hurts will be healed. Remembering this promise helps us to prepare for the season of celebrating new life, the Resurrection, and the holiday of Easter. Please join us!

Are some of these ideas new to you? Here are a few thoughts that might help!

WHAT IS THE SEASON OF LENT?

There is a tradition of studying Jesus's life, and fasting for 40 days before Easter - the celebration of Resurrection. That time of reflection is called Lent.

WHAT IS A LECTIONARY?

The word lectionary has come to mean "daily lesson", and it lets people know that they are using something they can return to over and over again. Repeating readings and lessons helps us to remember important ideas and strengthen our connection to God and to our community.

WHAT IS BLACK LIBERATION?

The Liberation Lectionary uses what is called a theological lens. Just like all writings and ideas from any person. What we believe about the world shapes the ideas that we share. The writers of this devotional believe that God favors people who are oppressed and gives special gifts of faith and promises to them. In much of the history of the world, Black people have been oppressed and exploited for our gifts. So when God's word talks about freedom, victory and healing, that promise includes Black people in a special way.

Healing Generational Wounds

Throughout history, people have caused harm to one another. Generational wounds are a type of harm from oppression that is passed down through age groups. Generational wounds can look like minimizing and denying how much we hurt each other, on purpose, and on accident. Sometimes the wounds cause ageism, which is when people of different ages mistreat each other.

THEME SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 54:1-3

Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who never had descendants; because more are the children of the forgotten people than the ones who have much wealth, says the Lord. Make room in your house, open your welcoming doors wide, do not live in scarcity; strengthen your structures to receive an abundant blessing. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess their oppressors, and settle in their desolate cities.

HEALING IN THE BIBLE: LOIS, EUNICE, AND TIMOTHY



Lois and Eunice and Timothy were a family talked about in the Bible: 2 Timothy 1:5. Lois had a daughter named Eunice, who had a son named Timothy. The two women raised Timothy together, and they taught him to have faith in God, which made him a humble, caring leader. You can learn more about the impact that Timothy's mom and grandmother had on him by reading the letters written to him, named 1st and 2nd Timothy. We can see healing through their story by recognizing that in God's house, generations in families are not separated. Older people do not disrespect young people, and young people honor their elders.

HEALING IN HISTORY: CLAUDETTE COLVIN

Civil Rights Pioneer. Claudette was the first to challenge segregation in the Montgomery bus system when she refused to give up her seat to a white woman. Because she was a youth, and she had a child but did not have a husband, she was judged by older people who thought her story was too complicated, or too messy. Claudette is a less well-known catalyst for the Montgomery Boycotts. We can see healing through her work in history by remembering to honor her today.



CLAUDETTE COLVIN

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: *Fill your whole self with breath*

Then say: *Lord, heal my wounds*

Exhale slowly: *So that I may pass on healing*

Inhale: *Lord, heal my wounds*

Exhale slowly: *So that I may pass on hope*

Inhale: *Lord, heal my wounds*

Exhale slowly: *That I may do no harm*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Name some of the generational wounds you see in your culture, and in your home.
 - Pray about those wounds every day this week.
 - Write and talk about ways those wounds could be healed.
- Do you struggle to respect people who are older than you, or people who are younger than you? Why or why not?
- Where do you see ageism in your culture, and in your home?
- What are some ways you can work to heal from ageism?



Healing Ableism

We live in a diverse world where people have different abilities. Ableism is when someone is left out, mistreated, or seen as less valuable because of their different ability. Ableism can look like laughing at someone with hearing aids, not letting someone with crutches play kickball, or a building having no ramps for wheelchairs.

THEME SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 54:11-12

Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.

HEALING IN THE BIBLE: JOANNA



In the New Testament, Joanna is mentioned in Luke chapter 8. She was a faithful follower of Jesus who donated her time and money for the work he was doing. The scriptures tell us that even though Joanna was married to a powerful man, she suffered many illnesses. She would have been seen as a person whose importance in society came from her money and connection to powerful people. In a culture of ableism, sickness and a need for assisted living reduces a person's value. But in God's community, needing each other is the way that we all thrive. The Lord loves people who are differently abled. Through the work of Jesus to seek out disabled people and care for them, God calls us to give special treatment to disabled people by dedicating time and money to their well-being, just like Joanna connected to the community to provide the same.

HEALING IN HISTORY: MARY & MILDRED DAVIDSON

Mildred Davidson was disabled by MS from childhood. MS is multiple sclerosis, a disease of the brain and spinal cord. Mildred's sister Mary invented products to help Mildred and all disabled people. Mildred and Mary would work together to come up with ideas, and Mildred tested all of the products Mary built to see if they were helpful. Mary Davidson eventually held multiple patents for new inventions. We can see healing in this story of a Black, disabled woman, who was shown respect and inspired inventions that helped her to live more freely. We can see healing justice in the story of an inventor who loved her sister so much, she dedicated her creativity to supporting her.



MARY & MILDRED DAVIDSON

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: *Fill your whole self with breath*

Then say: *We are fearfully and wonderfully made*

Exhale slowly: *In God's eyes we are all whole*

Inhale: *We are fearfully and wonderfully made*

Exhale slowly: *In God's eyes, we are complete*

Inhale: *We are fearfully and wonderfully made*

Exhale slowly: *In God's eyes, we are good*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Name some of the ways people of different abilities are important in your culture, and in your home.
- How does God show love to people no matter what they are able to do physically, or even mentally?
- Look up and learn about liberation resources like *Disabled Black Lives Matter*.
- Write and talk about ways the wounds of ableism can be healed.
- Do you struggle to respect people who are differently abled than you? Why or why not?
- Pray about those concerns every day this week.



Healing Our Children

We all start out as children – even Jesus did! We know that children are naturally creative, energetic, kind, resilient, persistent, and fast learners. We have to protect our children, nurture those great things about them, and be sure not to practice ageism or mistreat them in any way. When we listen to our children, we learn better ways to solve problems, treat each other kindly, and make sure our world is healthy for everyone.

THEME SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 54:13

All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace.

HEALING IN THE BIBLE: SHIPHRAH & PUAH



In Exodus 1:15-21, we meet two midwives who are part of the liberation story of many Hebrew families that were enslaved by Pharaoh, the ruler in ancient Egypt. Many people worshiped the Pharaoh as a god. When the Pharaoh commanded that all enslaved families were forbidden to have baby boys, Shiphrah and Puah were two of the experts in helping birthing people deliver their babies. They defied Pharaoh's orders and brought many baby boys and their parents through safe and healthy birth stories. Their act of defiance is called resistance. We see healing in their story because they were not afraid to disobey an oppressive ruler.

HEALING IN HISTORY: THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

On May 2, 1963, thousands of school-aged children met in downtown Birmingham to protest segregation. Their protest was met with violence from local authorities. The Children's Crusade was a pivotal moment in the movement for Civil Rights. It re-energized the movement for political equality for Black communities after a series of losses, and inspired more people to support the cause of freedom. We can see healing in this story because children were invited to participate in the movement for Black liberation. The work of these children teaches us that we don't have to wait until we are "old enough" to learn how to fight for the freedom we deserve.



CHILDREN FROM THE
1963 PROTEST

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: *Fill your whole self with breath*

Then say: *All the children are treasured*

Exhale slowly: *And great will be their peace*

Inhale: *All the children are seen*

Exhale slowly: *And great will be their peace*

Inhale: *All the children are loved*

Exhale slowly: *And great will be their peace*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Read the story of Puah and Shiphrah in the book of Exodus. What questions come to mind?
- Share some thoughts about the story and how the midwives defied the king of their day.
- Are there times when you have felt sure you should resist a rule that causes harm?
- Why are children important in your culture and in your home?
- How can you invite young people to help in healing work?
- How can you as a young person work to bring power and equal rights to Black people?
- Choose a few books about children and the Civil Rights Movement and read together.
 - *Let the Children March*, by Monica Clark-Robinson and Frank Morrison
 - *If You Were a Kid During the Civil Rights Movement*, by Gwendolyn Hooks
- What inspires you about these stories?
- What challenges you?
- Does anything make you afraid or uncomfortable?

Healing Wounds of Sexism and Bigotry

In the Bible, people are called men or women, boys or girls. These are gender types and identities. But because God and even the angels do not identify as a gender, we believe that all gender identities deserve to be respected. God transcends all identities and loves everyone! Sexism is when someone is mistreated because of their gender identity. This can look like saying girls aren't strong, boys can't like the color pink, or that someone isn't the gender identity they say they are. This is bigotry, which is being unkind and unwelcoming of someone's identity, opinions, or choices because they're not the same as ours. Everyone can identify however they want and have their own opinions and choices as long as they're not harming someone else.

THEME SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 54:14-15

Your people will be established in justice; you will be settled and safe, far away from oppression, for you shall not fear; and far from terror, for it shall not come near you. If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from God; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you.

HEALING IN THE BIBLE: DEBORAH

In the book of Judges, chapters 4-5, we find the story of a great warrior, prophet, leader, and decision maker. This story is about a woman named Deborah. She had the title of Judge, a type of community advisor and ruler whose power came from the people, for the purpose of helping the people to live healthy, loving lives. Deborah fought a major battle for her people, and she prophesied that the hero of the battle would be yet another woman. When Deborah's friend, the

military general named Barak, asked her to bring her expertise to the fight, she told him that she had seen the future of them winning the struggle, but the glory going to a woman. General Barak was humble enough to say that what mattered to him was his people's freedom. We can see healing in this story because Deborah's gender was respected and her prophecies, power and decisions were honored as equal.



HEALING IN HISTORY: BAYARD RUSTIN

Civil Rights Organizer and Nonviolent Activist, Bayard Rustin was a key strategist in the movement to win equal voting rights for Black people in the United States. He helped to plan and organize both the 1963 March on Washington and the Freedom Rides. Despite his many contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, Bayard was pushed into the background because of his identity as a gay man. We can commit to healing justice by talking about Bayard Rustin as an honored ancestor. We can show love and respect to our queer neighbors. We can join in the fight for freedom for all Black people, no matter how they live out their desires to love.



BAYARD RUSTIN

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: *Fill your whole self with breath*

Then say: *Help us to see injustice*

Exhale slowly: *Call us into right relationship*

Inhale: *Help us to see fractures*

Exhale slowly: *Call us into wholeness*

Inhale: *Help us to see indifference*

Exhale slowly: *Call us into compassion*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Name some of the conversations about gender you hear about in your culture, and in your home.
- Have you ever judged someone – or yourself – for a part of their identity that God loves?
 - Pray about those wounds every day this week.
 - Write and talk about ways those wounds could be healed.
- Do you struggle to respect people who identify in ways that you think they should not?
- Are you uncomfortable considering that there are more than two genders? Why or why not?
- Where do you see bigotry in your culture, and in your home?
- What are some ways you can work to heal from bigotry?

Healing from Carceral Christianity

The “carceral state” is made up of all the things that oppress and isolate people, from police to jails. At school, this might look like police resource officers patrolling the halls, or being sent to detention. Getting free from the carceral state means becoming abolitionists. Abolition is when we work together to get rid of the idea that punishment is our best protection, and we make our world healthy for everyone by showing mercy to each other. Sometimes we use our religion to punish people instead of showing God’s mercy. We call this Carceral Christianity. Loving our neighbor the way Jesus taught love means standing up to anything that causes harm, so God calls us to be abolitionists who stand up to the carceral state in all its forms.

THEME SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 54:16-17

See it is I, the Lord, who created the craftsman who blows the fire of coals, and produces a tool fit for its purpose; I have also created the avenger to bring justice for the oppressed. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and you shall silence every tongue that passes judgment against you. This is the heritage of the people of God, and their ultimate vindication from me, says the Lord.

HEALING IN THE BIBLE: JOHN THE BAPTIST

Jesus called John, his cousin, the greatest prophet who was ever born. John was called the Baptizer, or the Baptist, because he performed a symbolic washing away of people’s mistakes and unhealthy viewpoints. John the Baptist spoke truth to people in power, and held kings accountable without fear. He was arrested and sentenced to death because the truth that he told was causing people to believe in God’s power above the power of their oppressive



leaders. This work became a threat because John could not be controlled and his message was spreading. We can see healing in John’s story through the work of Jesus to keep calling leaders and rulers to accountability. He even challenged the leaders of the church in his time.

HEALING IN HISTORY: ASSATA SHAKUR

Assata is a freedom fighter and political activist. She held membership in the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army and fought tirelessly against police brutality and misconduct. After she was falsely accused of murder, she became the first woman to ever be included on the FBI's "Most Wanted Terrorist" list. She escaped incarceration, after being shot by the FBI, and lives in Cuba under political asylum. Healing justice in Assata's story comes from her determination to abolish prisons and the power of police, and to never give up on her message - which is much like the message of John the Baptist. Assata teaches us that people in power cannot control or take away the power of the people.



ASSATA SHAKUR

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: *Fill your whole self with breath*

Then say: *Freedom is what God desires*

Exhale slowly: *Help me to release what is bound*

Inhale: *Freedom is what God desires*

Exhale Slowly: *Help me be free*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What makes you afraid? What makes you feel safe?
- Define punishment as a group. What is punishment supposed to accomplish?
- What are some ways that people who cause harm learn to bring healing?
- What makes you change and apologize when you do something harmful?
- How can we work together to show mercy and make punishment unnecessary?
- Talk about police, prisons, and the carceral state. We recommend:
 - Information about abolition from Families for Justice (bit.ly/abolitionforkids)
 - Information about the prison industrial complex from Critical Resistance (tinyurl.com/aboutPICAbolition)
 - Freedom Community Center in St. Louis (freedomstl.org, [@fccstlouis](https://twitter.com/fccstlouis))
- What do you think about the concept of abolition?
- What makes you interested in abolition? What makes you uncomfortable?
- How can you work for healing, whether or not you agree with the practice and ethic of abolition?



Healing Climate

The environment on our planet is drastically changing, and climate change is a term that we use to describe pattern changes like high and low temperatures and amount of rainfall over a long period of time. While weather is temporary and changes all the time, the word "climate" is used to describe the normal weather conditions in a region over a long period of time. Climate justice means to talk about how climate change impacts both our earth and the people on it, and to include everyone's voice in making a plan to care for our planet. It can make us think of generational wounds, because if we don't take care of our planet now, climate change will hurt our children and grandchildren much worse than we know.

THEME SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 55:9-13

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you will burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

HEALING IN THE BIBLE: CREATION STORY, EVE

Eve is part of the creation story in Genesis. You might recognize her as the first woman that God ever made. Her name means "mother of everything that lives." She was made to be a protector and partner in taking care of the garden where God placed her and the human named Adam. Eve was a strong mother, and she faced many challenges. She watched her whole environment change because she and Adam chose not to live in harmony with God. But we can still see healing in Eve's story, because God promised that a great healer, a deliverer, would come from the generations that followed her, a healer whose work would never be threatened. We are all descended from Eve, and we can all be part of the great healing that God promised.



HEALING IN HISTORY: DR. WANGARI MAATHAI

Environment and Women's Rights Activist- Wangari Maathai is the first woman to earn a Doctor of Philosophy degree, or a Ph.D, from central or east Africa. She founded the Greenbelt Movement in 1977 and fought arduously for women's rights and reforestation. In 2004, Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize becoming the first African woman to do so. Mama Wangari used to say "It's the little things that people do. That's what will make the difference." Wangari Maathai was a healer like our mother Eve in many ways. She planted trees for environmental healing, she spoke out for women who were being mistreated. She demanded change and an end to harmful practices - for the climate and for humanity. We can learn from her life that healing people is always connected to healing our world.



DR. WANGARI MAATHAI

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: *Fill your whole self with breath*

Then say: *God cares for all Creation*

Exhale slowly: *I am under God's care*

Inhale: *God cares for all Creation*

Exhale slowly: *We are under God's care*

Inhale: *God cares for all Creation*

Exhale slowly: *Creation is under God's care*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the weather normally like where you live?
- Describe a week where the temperature suddenly changed from warm to cold, or cold to hot!
- What is the difference between weather and climate?
- What are some ways that you can take care of the planet and slow down climate change?
- Read Genesis chapters 1-3 with a friend or a family member. What do you think about the story of God creating the earth? What are some questions you have?
- Read about Dr. Wangari Maathai and talk with friends and family about her life and work.
 - *Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees*, by Franck Prévot
 - *Dr. Wangari Maathai Plants a Forest*, from the *Rebel Girls* series
- Learn more about Climate Justice in Africa:
 - wired.com/story/africa-attention-climate-crisis
- Learn more about Climate Justice campaigns:
 - NASA's Guide (climatekids.nasa.gov)
 - Zinn Education Project (zinnedproject.org/campaigns/teach-climate-justice)



Waiting to Begin Again

Surely the Lord has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The punishment that brought our peace was laid on Him. And by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)

Healing from generational wounds, sexism and bigotry, carceral systems and climate injustice, all of these are in God's hands. God is a healer and has made us healers, too. As we work together to bring healing, we are also being healed by God. We all have wounds that need tending and brokenness that needs mending. God's promise to all people of faith is that pain and suffering will never be part of how we heal. No pain that we have experienced or caused - not even any of the mistakes we make - will ever be part of the process to make us whole. Jesus took on all of the harm and pain that humans have ever caused, so that humans and all of creation can heal and be made whole without any more suffering. Everything that hurts will be healed.

During the week before Resurrection Day, the holiday called Easter in some places, we think about waiting and hope. We think about how badly the world needs to be made whole. Sometimes we read scriptures about all the ways that Jesus comes to save us, and pray prayers asking God to help us

remember the work of Jesus in our everyday lives. This week of waiting is symbolic – a word used for something that reminds us of or points us to an idea or an action. It's symbolic of the waiting God has asked us to do for the world to be completely renewed. This week also reminds us of how little we can see while we wait.

We believe that the resurrection of Jesus (that means we believe that Jesus came back to life, even though he died) also gives us a new way of life. We believe that Resurrection life will extend to all of life, but we are not sure when. So we don't know how long we have to wait to see everything that is hurting be healed, or to see everything that is dying, live again.

What we do have is God's promise that suffering should not be part of our survival. Because Jesus has taken all of the hurts that ever happened, nobody needs to be harmed while we heal. This is why we keep telling stories, singing songs, praying together, and working to bring healing – just like Jesus does.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you for learning, reading and praying with us through this season of Lent. As you enter into Holy Week, we wish you all the hope and expectation that the Resurrection celebration brings!

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