

# Provisions for the Journey

Brief reflections on the week's Scripture readings  
Third Week of Easter, 2023



**Sunday, April 23:** *"We were hoping"* (Lk 24:13-35).

Cleopas and his companion (likely his wife, mentioned in John 19 at the foot of the cross) are on the road out of Jerusalem, leaving as soon as they can after the sabbath. Put yourself in their sandals and walk with them. Imagine their emotions: fear, grief, confusion, disbelief at the reports of the women at the tomb. Disillusionment. Maybe even despair. You can hear it in their words to the stranger who approaches them: *"We were hoping..."*

**Today's Provision: "We are hoping. We will hope."** Do any of the travelers' emotions resonate with you? I hear a lot about fear and disillusionment. I have to remind myself that, when I am feeling these emotions, they have everything to do with human existence and institutions and nothing to do with God. Now, we know Christ is alive and the living source of our hope today and that we need not wait for the next life to reach heaven. Heaven is ours now; if we pay attention, we can see God's hand everywhere! Let us pray for the strength to live today and look forward in hope. Let us continue to be beacons of light amid the darkness.

**Monday, April 24:** *"The way of your decrees let me grasp, that I may dwell on your wonders...in your teaching grant me grace. The way of trust I have chosen"* (Ps 119, Hebrew translation).

I love the Hebrew translation, particularly the phrase "the way of trust" rather than the Septuagint's "the way of truth." Maybe I am just like cynical Pilate asking Jesus, "What is truth?" The "truth" gets twisted around a lot, but trust, faith, and belief in God-- אמונה, "amune" in Hebrew—these speak to me in a real way. I believe in the real Truth—that we live and move and have our being in the hands of a merciful God. And, I have faith the Spirit will lead me to the real Truth in every situation and person I encounter if I but pay attention to her guidance. But God doesn't ask us to know or understand or have everything figured out. God asks us to trust, to believe.

**Today's Provision: Pray for faith and the grace to grasp God's wisdom.** We cannot will ourselves to know as God knows. As I've mentioned in the past that's what got us into hot water in the first place! Nor can we will ourselves to surrender. But we pray for the grace to begin to grasp: to, in some small way, begin to understand the wisdom of God's command to love and the power this wisdom has to change lives, to change the world. As you pray today, enumerating your petitions for healing and help, pray also for the grace to see how God is working wonders right now in your life. Choose the way of trust that leads to the Truth.

**Tuesday, April 25:** *"Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour"* (1 Pt 5:5-14).

I watch a lot of nature shows and have yet to see a prowling lion roaring at the same time! Not a very effective way to hunt, I'd say. But this roaring, prowling lion Peter refers to—the Devil, or per St. Ignatius, the "evil spirit and enemy of our human nature,"—could it be we've just gotten so accustomed to the roaring that we don't hear it anymore?

**Today's Provision: Be sober and vigilant.** Doesn't sound like much fun. The Lord does not want us to live in fear, so I'd like to suggest an alternative: Pay attention and be open to God's strength. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis writes: *"It's funny how mortals always picture us [devils] as putting evil things into their minds; in reality, our best work is done by keeping things out."* So, let's remind ourselves of that reality: temptation is always lurking, always prowling, often in very quiet ways. But we also have to look at reality in another way: evil roars in our world. Perhaps we've grown used to it, we tolerate it; maybe even, as we talked about yesterday, have come to think of it as "the truth!" Pray today God will open your ears, eyes, mind, and heart to both the subtle and roaring voices of evil that exist, to grant you the grace to resist it, and the courage to name it—for yourself and others—for what it truly is.

**Wednesday, April 26:** *"And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day"* (Jn 6:35-40).

People are hot and bothered about pronouns these days. "It" is a pronoun. What is the "it" Jesus refers to in this passage? Well, it's all that God has given him. So, what is the "all" God has given him? *"The Father loves the Son, and has placed all things in his hand"* (Jn 3:35). All things—the earth, all its creatures, every human being—these are all in Jesus' hand. And Jesus wants no one, nothing to be lost.

**Today's Provision: Just love!** Now, before you accuse me of cherry-picking what I find in Scripture to support my beliefs, I know the verse that follows: *"This is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life."* Read literally, this would imply anyone who is not a Christian will not be raised. This is not part of my belief. I believe God wants everyone home. *"God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God in them"* (1 Jn 4:16). We will be judged, as St. John of the Cross tells us, *"on how well we have loved."* Can we just stop condemning? Can we try to abide in God, and just love?

**Thursday, April 27:** *"He has given life to our souls, and has not let our feet slip"* (Ps 66).

This verse caught my attention because it's contrary to my own experience: God has given life to my soul precisely by letting me slip. The life of my soul is a direct result of God's great mercy. Verse 10 of this psalm reads: *"You tested us, O God, tried us as silver tried by fire. You led us into a snare."* I don't believe God entraps us or leads us to suffer, but allows us to experience suffering, all the while inviting us back into his merciful embrace.

**Today's Provision: Rejoice in God's mercy!** Our greatest spiritual growth comes from facing our sorrows and sins in the light of God's mercy. If you find yourself on slippery ground, don't despair. God will give your soul life. We meet God most fully in the realm of mercy. Turn back and be glad!

**Friday, April 28:** *The Lord said to him, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." ... "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul"* (Acts 9:1-20).

I'm intrigued by the minor players in Scripture stories, in this case, the man named Judas at whose house Saul will stay. We don't hear of God explaining to him the role he will play. Scholars suggest this person is one of the men travelling with Saul to Damascus. That makes sense to me, but I'm sure our man Judas is having trouble making sense of all that is happening around him!

**Today's Provision: Accept your role in salvation history.** If he is indeed one of Saul's companions, he heard Jesus' voice, saw the light, and witnessed Saul struck blind. I'm not sure I'd have stuck around for the next act! I doubt many of us ever find ourselves in such a dramatic situation. But let's use this example: you volunteer to help the poor. Maybe your role is to accompany people as they try to improve their lives. This work is often "one step up and two steps back," and there can be lots of drama. You doubt you are making any difference, and there are other staff and volunteers who can do more to help. But you show up anyway. You allow God to use you in whatever role God sees fit (of course, discerning all the while that it is indeed work God has called you to). Like the men who bring the paralytic to Jesus to be healed, our role in the story fades into the background. Be joyful and remember, Jesus sees our faith.

**Saturday, April 29:** *"To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving"* (Ps 116).

Chapters 3 and 7 in The Book of Leviticus provide detailed information about peace and thanksgiving sacrifices and offerings. There are lots of rules and rituals to be adhered to. What sacrifice of thanksgiving do you offer to God?

**Today's Provision: Call upon God's name in thanksgiving.** I'm sure the psalmist follows the rules about making an acceptable sacrifice of thanksgiving. But the writer also says, *"I will call upon the name of the Lord,"* and I will do so in the presence of all his people. How is that a sacrifice, and what does it mean for us?

Maybe we're called to put aside our egos and ambitions, our determination to go it alone, to be "self-made"—as if that were actually possible! Perhaps it means that in whatever situation we encounter, wherever we are, we acknowledge and thank God for our blessings, even the ones disguised as challenges and trials. Consider developing some small ritual to express your gratitude to God as you go about your day. Perhaps a quick prayer or a point skyward like the baseball players do after they hit a homerun! Better yet, gather the family together to discuss the things you are most grateful for, give thanks to God, then donate time or money to an organization that helps people lacking in those things. Call upon God's name to bless your donation. Whatever you do, don't go it alone. Call on God to be with you.