

Before We Begin the Journey

Grace and peace,

Throughout September, we walked together through Walking the Way of Grace: 30 Days of Following Jesus. We discovered that grace goes toward, grace lets go, grace gives generously, and grace says yes. The devotional may have ended, but the way of grace did not.

This October, I invite you to continue the journey through Grace Made Visible: A 31-Day Journey of Living What We Believe.

Grace is a gift we receive from God. Yet grace does not remain hidden within us. It bears fruit through our actions, makes room for others, reminds us that we belong to God, and teaches us to love. During these thirty-one days, we will ask how what we believe on Sunday can take shape in our homes, relationships, workplaces, church, and community throughout the week.

Our journey is rooted in Scripture and connected to the Gospel lessons we will hear in worship. We will reflect on the vineyard entrusted to us, the invitation to God's Table, the image of God we bear, and the command to love God and our neighbors. Along the way, World Communion Sunday, Laity Sunday, Reformation Sunday, and KJ's baptism will help us see the grace of God taking visible form in the life of the church.

Each day includes Scripture, a reflection Along the Way, The Word for the Way, a practical step for Walking the Way, prayer, and a Question for the Journey. The goal is not to add another task to an already full day. The goal is to stay close to Jesus and allow one faithful step to connect what we believe with the way we live.

That calling reflects who we are at Friendship:

“Grow as Disciples, Serve as Friends. Love All; Serve All; Follow One!”

Our mission becomes meaningful when it moves beyond words. As we grow as disciples, may the grace we receive shape us. As we serve as friends, may that grace become visible to others.

Church family, let us continue the journey together.

Grace is received in the heart and revealed through the life.

Blessings,

Pastor Rudy

Rev. Dr. Rudolph H. White, Jr.

Friendship United Methodist Church

The Journey at a Glance

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thirty-one daily readings accompany the October sermon series.

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
Oct 01	From Walking to Living	1
Oct 02	Grace You Can See	3
Oct 03	Entrusted Not Entitled	5
Oct 04	The Vineyard Belongs to God	7
Oct 05	What Is Growing Through Me	9
Oct 06	Faithful with What We Have Received	11
Oct 07	The Fruit of Justice	13
Oct 08	The Banquet Is Ready	15
Oct 09	Making Room	17
Oct 10	Do Not Miss the Invitation	19
Oct 11	There Is Room at the Table	21
Oct 12	The Excuses We Make	23
Oct 13	Come as You Are	25
Oct 14	Clothed in a New Way	27
Oct 15	Welcomed and Changed	29
Oct 16	Whose Image Is This	31
Oct 17	God Shows No Partiality	33
Oct 18	Whose Image Do You Bear	35
Oct 19	You Belong to God	37
Oct 20	More Than What Is in Your Pocket	39
Oct 21	Created in God's Image	41
Oct 22	Ministry Beyond the Church Walls	43
Oct 23	Called to Serve	45
Oct 24	A Life That Points to God	47
Oct 25	The Heart of It All	49
Oct 26	Loving God with All We Are	51
Oct 27	Who Is My Neighbor	53
Oct 28	Love Takes Action	55
Oct 29	Passing Faith Forward	57
Oct 30	The Spirit Has Been Poured Out	59
Oct 31	Still Being Made New	61

DAY 1 • THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

From Walking to Living

James 1:22–25 (NRSVUE)

“Be doers of the word and not merely hearers.” — James 1:22

Along the Way

A person can study a recipe, underline the important steps, and describe the finished dish in detail. But no one is fed until someone enters the kitchen and begins to cook.

Faith can remain like that recipe. We can admire the words of Jesus, discuss them in worship, and agree that they are true. Yet the Word is meant to move from the page into our choices.

The Word for the Way

Last month we walked the way of grace. We considered reconciliation, forgiveness, generosity, and the kind of yes that becomes visible through obedience. James now gives us the next step: “Be doers of the word.”

James is not dismissing listening. We must hear before we can respond. His concern is that hearing alone can create the illusion that faithfulness has already happened. A sermon may move us. A devotion may challenge us. A Scripture may stay with us all day. But the question remains: What will we do with what we have heard?

October invites us to move from walking the way of grace to living what we believe. Grace bears fruit through our actions. Grace makes room for people. Grace reminds us whose image we bear. Grace teaches us to love God and our neighbors with more than words.

This is not an invitation to earn God’s love through activity. We act because grace has already met us. The gift received in the heart begins to take shape in the life.

Grace is received in the heart and revealed through the life.

Walking the Way

Choose one truth God impressed upon you during September. Write it in a sentence. Then name one action that would allow that truth to become visible today.

Keep the action small enough to begin and meaningful enough to matter.

Prayer

Living God, thank you for the Word that speaks to my heart. Keep me from mistaking agreement for obedience. By your grace, help me put into practice what you are teaching me, one faithful choice at a time. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What truth have I heard from God that now needs to become something I do?

DAY 2 • FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

Grace You Can See

Matthew 5:14–16 (NRSVUE)

“Let your light shine before others.” — Matthew 5:16

Along the Way

A porch light does not make a speech. It simply shines. On a dark evening, that quiet light says, “Someone is here. There is a place of welcome. You can find the way.”

Some of the clearest things we say about our faith are communicated before we speak.

The Word for the Way

Jesus tells his disciples that they are the light of the world. Then he speaks about good works that others can see. He is not encouraging religious performance or asking us to draw attention to ourselves. The light is meant to direct attention toward God.

Grace becomes visible when patience replaces a sharp reply. It is seen when someone who could have walked past chooses to stop. It appears when a person gives quietly, welcomes sincerely, listens carefully, or admits, “I was wrong.”

None of those actions saves us. They reveal what the saving grace of God is doing within us.

We sometimes assume that sharing our faith requires having the perfect words. Words matter, but a grace-shaped life gives those words credibility. People may forget what we said about love, yet remember whether they felt loved in our presence.

Jesus does not say, “Tell everyone how bright you are.” Jesus says, “Let your light shine.” The light belongs to Christ. We simply refuse to hide what Christ is doing in us.

Walking the Way

Offer one quiet expression of grace today without seeking recognition. Encourage someone, make room, listen without interrupting, or complete an unnoticed act of service.

Let the action point beyond you to God.

Prayer

Jesus, Light of the world, shine through my words, choices, and relationships. Keep me from seeking attention for myself. Let someone encounter your patience, kindness, or welcome through the way I live today. Amen.

Question for the Journey

If someone watched the way I live today, where might that person see the grace of Jesus?

DAY 3 • SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

Entrusted Not Entitled

Matthew 21:33–41 (NRSVUE)

“There was a landowner who planted a vineyard.” — Matthew 21:33

Along the Way

Borrowing something valuable changes the way we hold it. We tend to become more careful because we know it belongs to someone else. We want to return it in good condition.

Trouble begins when we forget that what has been placed in our hands is still a gift.

The Word for the Way

Jesus begins the parable with a landowner who planted a vineyard, built a fence, dug a wine press, and constructed a watchtower. Before the tenants arrived, the owner had already prepared what the vineyard needed to flourish.

The tenants received something they did not create. Their failure began when they treated the vineyard as though it belonged to them.

That temptation is not limited to land. We can begin to treat our time, abilities, relationships, church, influence, and possessions as though they exist only for our benefit. We forget the grace that prepared the soil before we arrived: people who taught us, prayed for us, sacrificed for us, opened doors, and planted seeds whose fruit we now enjoy.

Christian stewardship begins with two words: entrusted, not entitled.

What God places in our hands is meant to serve God’s purposes. The question is not merely, “What do I have?” The deeper question is, “What is God asking me to cultivate with what I have received?”

Walking the Way

Name one gift that has been entrusted to you: time, ability, money, influence, property, experience, or a relationship.

Thank God for the people and grace that helped place it in your hands. Then choose one way to use that gift for someone else.

Prayer

Generous God, everything good in my life begins with your grace. Forgive me when I confuse stewardship with ownership. Teach me to hold your gifts with gratitude and use them faithfully for your purposes. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What have I been treating as my possession that God may be asking me to receive as a trust?

DAY 4 • SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

The Vineyard Belongs to God

Matthew 21:33–46 (NRSVUE)

*“The kingdom of God...will be given to a people that produces its fruits.” —
Matthew 21:43*

World Communion Sunday

Today's Sermon

Entrusted with the Vineyard: Grace That Bears Fruit

Along the Way

A family cared for a community garden plot for years. They planted carefully, watered faithfully, and shared vegetables with neighbors. Over time, the garden felt like theirs.

Yet the ground had always belonged to the community. Their work mattered, but their work never changed whose garden it was.

The Word for the Way

The tenants in Jesus' parable forgot whose vineyard they were tending. When the owner sent servants to receive the fruit, they responded with violence. They wanted the vineyard without the landowner and the benefits without accountability.

The parable confronts every generation of God's people. The church does not belong to us. The gospel is not ours to control. Ministry is not property we defend. God has entrusted us with a place in the vineyard so that the fruit of the kingdom may grow through us.

On World Communion Sunday, the Lord's Table gives this truth a visible form. The Table belongs to Christ. Around the world, people gather in different languages, cultures, traditions, and communities, yet receive from the same Lord. Christ is the host, and we are guests who have been welcomed by grace.

The fruit God seeks includes justice, mercy, reconciliation, generosity, faithfulness, and love. Communion nourishes us for that life. We receive bread and cup, then return to the vineyard.

We have been given a place in God's vineyard. What fruit is growing because God entrusted this part of the vineyard to us?

Before Worship

Christ, as I prepare for worship and Communion, remind me that the Table, the church, and the vineyard belong to you. Nourish me so that my life may bear the fruit of your kingdom.

Walking the Way

After worship, identify one fruit of God's kingdom that needs cultivation in your part of the vineyard. Choose a specific action connected to justice, mercy, reconciliation, generosity, faithfulness, or love.

Prayer

Lord of the vineyard and Host of the Table, thank you for preparing a place for me. Free me from the desire to possess what belongs to you. Through the grace I receive, produce fruit that blesses your world. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What fruit is growing because God entrusted this part of the vineyard to me?

What Is Growing Through Me

Galatians 5:22–25 (NRSVUE)

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” — Galatians 5:22–23

Along the Way

Fruit reveals something about the tree from which it grows. An apple tree does not need a sign explaining what it is. In time, what is rooted within becomes visible on the branches.

Our lives also produce fruit. Repeated words, reactions, and choices reveal what is taking root in us.

The Word for the Way

Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit in qualities that become visible through relationships: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These are not decorations added to a religious life. They are evidence that the Spirit is reshaping us from within. Patience becomes visible when we are interrupted. Gentleness appears when we hold power. Self-control matters when anger rises. Kindness becomes real when nothing requires us to offer it.

Fruit does not grow through strain alone. A branch bears fruit by remaining connected to its source of life. In the same way, Christian character grows as we remain close to Christ through prayer, Scripture, worship, Communion, and life in community.

We can pretend for a moment, but fruit develops over time. That is encouraging. God is not finished with us. The Spirit continues cultivating the life of Jesus within ordinary people.

The question is not whether we appear religious. The question is what others are able to taste from the life growing through us.

Walking the Way

Read the fruit of the Spirit slowly. Choose one quality that needs special attention in your life today.

Ask the Spirit to create one opportunity for you to practice it, and pay attention when that opportunity arrives.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, cultivate the character of Jesus within me. Prune what harms and strengthen what gives life. Let love, patience, kindness, and faithfulness become visible in the way I treat others today. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What kind of fruit are my repeated words and actions producing in the lives around me?

Faithful with What We Have Received

1 Peter 4:8–11 (NRSVUE)

“Serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” — 1 Peter 4:10

Along the Way

A tool left untouched on a shelf may remain in perfect condition, but it never fulfills the purpose for which it was made. Its value becomes visible when someone puts it to work.

Gifts are similar. They are given to be used.

The Word for the Way

Peter takes it as a given that every believer has received a gift. He does not reserve ministry for a few visible leaders. He speaks to the whole church: “Serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

Some gifts are easily noticed. Others operate quietly. One person teaches. Another repairs. Someone organizes, sings, cooks, visits, encourages, gives, listens, prays, welcomes, or sees a need before anyone else does.

The size of the audience does not determine the value of the gift. Faithfulness does.

Sometimes we hide our gifts because they seem ordinary. Sometimes we compare what we can offer with what someone else does well. Sometimes we wait for a formal position before serving.

Peter gives another picture. We are stewards of God’s varied grace. Grace takes many forms because the needs of the body and the community are varied. The gift in your hands may be one way God intends to care for someone today.

The vineyard bears fruit when every disciple becomes faithful with what has been received.

Walking the Way

Complete this sentence: “One gift God has entrusted to me is...”

Use that gift in one concrete way today. Do not wait for an invitation, title, or audience if a simple act of service is already available.

Prayer

Giver of every good gift, thank you for entrusting me with something that can bless others. Free me from comparison and hesitation. Show me where my gift is needed, and make me faithful in using it. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Where might God be asking me to put one of my gifts to work?

The Fruit of Justice

Micah 6:6–8 (NRSVUE)

“Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.” — Micah 6:8

Along the Way

A basket of beautiful fruit can hide a troubling story. We may admire what is displayed without asking who planted, harvested, transported, or paid the cost for what we enjoy.

God is concerned not only with the fruit we present, but with the way it was grown.

The Word for the Way

The people in Micah’s day asked what impressive offering they could bring to God. The prophet redirected their attention from religious display to faithful living: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

Justice is grace made visible in the structures and choices that shape people’s lives. It asks whether neighbors are treated fairly, whether voices are heard, whether burdens are shared, and whether the vulnerable are protected.

Kindness without justice can offer comfort while leaving the cause of suffering untouched. Justice without kindness can become cold and self-righteous. Humility keeps us listening to God and to people whose experiences differ from our own.

The fruit of the kingdom includes personal mercy and public faithfulness. God cares about the conversation at our table and the conditions that determine who has a place at the table.

We may not be able to repair every injustice today. We can refuse indifference. We can learn, listen, speak, serve, vote, give, and examine the practices within our reach.

Walking the Way

Choose one issue affecting people in your community. Spend time listening or learning from a trustworthy local source, especially from those most affected.

Ask God to show you one faithful response that brings together justice, kindness, and humility.

Prayer

God of justice and mercy, open my eyes to burdens I have overlooked. Keep me from easy answers and self-righteousness. Teach me to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Where is God calling me to move from concern about injustice to one faithful action?

The Banquet Is Ready

Matthew 22:1–4 (NRSVUE)

“Look, I have prepared my dinner...everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.” — Matthew 22:4

Along the Way

Long before guests arrive, someone has been preparing. A table has been set. Food has been cooked. Chairs have been arranged. Details have been considered so that others can enter and receive what has been made ready.

An invitation often rests upon work the guest never sees.

The Word for the Way

Jesus begins the parable with a king preparing a wedding banquet for his son. The invitation is not to an empty room with a list of tasks. The banquet is ready.

Grace begins with what God has prepared. The invitation reaches us because God has acted first. In Jesus Christ, mercy has been offered, reconciliation opened, and a place prepared.

We often approach God as though we must bring something impressive enough to deserve entry. We carry our record, effort, knowledge, or regret. The invitation interrupts all of it: Come.

Receiving grace requires humility. We admit that we cannot provide the feast for ourselves. We come hungry. We come dependent. We come because the Host has made room.

The same grace changes the way we welcome others. When we remember that our place is a gift, we become less interested in deciding who deserves a chair. The church becomes a community of guests helping other guests hear the invitation.

The banquet is ready. Grace has already taken the first step.

Walking the Way

Begin today by receiving rather than achieving. Sit quietly and imagine Christ saying, “Everything is ready. Come.”

Thank God for one gift you could never have prepared or earned for yourself.

Prayer

Gracious Host, thank you for preparing what I could never provide for myself. Quiet the voice that tells me I must earn a place. Help me receive your welcome and extend it freely to others. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What makes it difficult for me simply to receive the welcome of God?

DAY 9 • FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

Making Room

Luke 14:12–14 (NRSVUE)

“Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.” — Luke 14:13

Along the Way

A table can be full while someone still feels alone. A room can contain an empty chair while an unspoken message says, “That place is not for you.”

Hospitality involves more than available space. It creates belonging.

The Word for the Way

Jesus challenges the social habits surrounding a meal. Hosts often invited people who could return the favor. The table reinforced familiar relationships and protected social standing.

Jesus asks his hearers to widen the guest list. Make room for people who cannot repay you. Welcome those whom society overlooks.

Grace-shaped hospitality notices who is missing. It asks whether newcomers understand what to do, whether children are welcomed, whether someone with limited mobility can participate, whether a person sitting alone is seen, and whether our language assumes everyone shares the same history.

Making room may require more than adding a chair. We may need to surrender convenience, adjust a routine, learn a name, slow the conversation, or release control over how things have always been done.

Jesus does not describe hospitality as entertainment. He describes a way of life that reflects the open heart of God.

The question is not only, “Do we have room?” It is, “Will someone know that this room includes them?”

Walking the Way

Notice the spaces you enter today: home, work, church, a meeting, or a conversation. Look for the person at the edge.

Take one step that communicates, “There is room for you here.”

Prayer

Welcoming God, thank you for making room for me. Open my eyes to people who are present but unseen. Give me the courage to adjust my habits so that your welcome becomes visible through mine. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Who may be waiting for me to make room in a way that creates genuine belonging?

DAY 10 • SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

Do Not Miss the Invitation

Matthew 22:5–7 (NRSVUE)

*“They made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business.”
— Matthew 22:5*

Along the Way

An invitation can remain unopened beneath a stack of mail. Nothing was wrong with the invitation. The person was simply busy, distracted, or convinced there would be time later.

Some invitations are missed through refusal. Others are missed through neglect.

The Word for the Way

The first guests in Jesus’ parable do not all announce open hostility. Some simply return to the farm or the business. Ordinary responsibilities become reasons to disregard the king’s invitation.

Busyness can make us unavailable to God without our ever deciding to walk away. The schedule fills. The mind remains occupied. Prayer becomes something we will resume when life settles down. Service waits for a less demanding season. The person who needs our attention receives only what is left.

Farms and businesses are not evil. Work matters. Responsibilities deserve care. The danger comes when good things become ultimate things and we can no longer hear the One calling us.

God’s invitation often arrives within ordinary life: pause, listen, forgive, worship, rest, serve, speak, go. We may not reject it. We may simply postpone it until the moment passes.

Tomorrow we will hear again that there is room at the table. Today we ask whether we are making room in our lives to respond.

Walking the Way

Identify one invitation from God that you have been postponing. Do not solve everything today.

Take one step that says, “I hear you, Lord, and I am willing to respond.”

Prayer

Patient God, forgive me for the ways distraction and busyness make me unavailable to you. Help me recognize your invitation within ordinary life. Give me courage to respond while the door is open. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What invitation from God am I in danger of missing because I keep telling myself there will be time later?

DAY 11 • SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

There Is Room at the Table

Matthew 22:1–14 (NRSVUE)

“Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find.” — Matthew 22:9

Today’s Sermon

There Is Room at the Table: Grace That Invites and Transforms

Along the Way

A host looked around the room and noticed that several chairs remained empty. Rather than remove them, she asked, “Who else needs to know there is a place here?”

The empty chairs became an invitation rather than an embarrassment.

The Word for the Way

After the first guests refuse, the king sends servants into the streets: “Invite everyone you find.” The hall fills with people who may never have imagined themselves included.

God’s invitation is wider than our expectations. Grace reaches beyond familiar circles, social boundaries, and the lists we might create. The church is most faithful when it sounds like the servants in the parable: There is room. Come.

Yet the parable also includes the wedding garment. That difficult detail keeps us from reducing grace to an invitation without transformation. We do not earn our place, but neither do we encounter the King and remain untouched.

The garment represents a life responsive to the occasion. Paul later speaks of clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. Grace welcomes us as we are and begins changing how we live.

There is room at God’s Table. The invitation has been extended. Will we simply hear it, or allow grace to prepare us for the life to which we have been called?

Before Worship

Welcoming Christ, as I prepare for worship, help me receive your invitation with gratitude. Show me whom I can welcome and what within me you desire to transform.

Walking the Way

Think of one person who may not assume there is room for them in the life of the church. Offer a sincere invitation or personal word of welcome.

Then ask God what change in you would make that welcome more believable.

Prayer

God of the open Table, thank you for inviting me by grace. Widen my heart toward those I might overlook. Clothe me with the character of Christ so that your welcome changes the way I live. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Whom is God asking me to welcome, and how is grace asking me to change?

The Excuses We Make

Luke 14:15–24 (NRSVUE)

“But they all alike began to make excuses.” — Luke 14:18

Along the Way

Most excuses contain enough truth to sound reasonable. We are tired. The timing is difficult. Something else needs attention. We tell ourselves we will respond when circumstances improve.

An excuse often protects us from saying the harder sentence: “I do not want to change my plans.”

The Word for the Way

In Jesus’ story of the great dinner, invited guests offer explanations connected to property, work, and family. None of those concerns is meaningless. Yet each one becomes more important than responding to the host.

Excuses reveal priorities. They show what receives our first yes and what must live on whatever remains.

We make spiritual excuses as well. I am not ready to forgive. Someone else can serve. I do not know enough to speak. My gift is too small. I will pray when I have more time. I will reach out when the other person does.

Grace does not shame us into action. Grace tells the truth about what our excuses are costing. Delay can harden into habit. A neglected relationship grows more distant. A gift remains unused. An opportunity to love passes.

God understands genuine limitations. Rest, boundaries, and seasons of healing matter. The Spirit does not ask us to do everything. The Spirit does ask us to become honest about the one thing we are avoiding.

An excuse closes the conversation. Honesty allows grace to begin.

Walking the Way

Listen for one sentence you use repeatedly to avoid a faithful step. Write it down.

Ask, “Is this a genuine limitation, or is it protecting me from discomfort?” Respond with compassion and honesty.

Prayer

Truthful and merciful God, you know my limitations and my excuses. Give me wisdom to honor healthy boundaries and courage to stop hiding behind explanations. Lead me toward the faithful response you are asking of me. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What excuse may be keeping me from an invitation God has already placed before me?

Come as You Are

Isaiah 55:1–3 (NRSVUE)

“Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.” — Isaiah 55:1

Along the Way

Some invitations arrive with an unspoken list of requirements: dress correctly, know the right people, understand the customs, and bring enough to contribute.

Isaiah announces another kind of invitation: come thirsty, come hungry, come without money.

The Word for the Way

The prophet speaks to people who cannot purchase what they need most. God offers water, food, and life as gifts.

“Come as you are” does not mean God is indifferent to who we become. It means transformation begins with honest arrival. We do not need to pretend that we are full when we are thirsty, strong when we are weary, or certain when we are searching.

Churches sometimes say, “All are welcome,” while expecting people to understand customs that have never been explained. We may sing of grace while quietly rewarding those who already know how to belong.

God’s invitation teaches us to welcome people before they can contribute, perform, or repay. It also gives us permission to come before God without hiding.

Bring the thirst. Bring the questions. Bring the unfinished story. Grace meets us there.

The One who says “Come” also says “Listen, so that you may live.” Welcome opens the door; relationship leads us forward.

Walking the Way

Tell God honestly where you are thirsty today. Do not edit the prayer to sound stronger than you feel.

Then consider how you can make it easier for someone else to come without pretending.

Prayer

God of living water, I come as I am: thirsty, unfinished, and dependent upon your grace. Meet me with what gives life. Make me a person whose welcome allows others to come honestly into your presence. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What part of myself am I tempted to hide before accepting God's invitation to come?

Clothed in a New Way

Colossians 3:12–17 (NRSVUE)

“Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” — Colossians 3:12

Along the Way

Clothing affects the way we enter a room. We choose what fits the occasion and what communicates who we understand ourselves to be.

Paul uses that familiar act to describe Christian character: put on a new way of living.

The Word for the Way

Paul does not tell the Colossians to dress themselves in religious superiority. He names compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love.

These qualities are the proper clothing for people who have been welcomed by grace.

The image is practical. We choose clothing repeatedly. In the same way, Christian character becomes visible through daily choices. When irritation rises, we put on patience. When someone fails, we put on compassion. When we want the final word, we put on humility. When hurt tempts us to keep a permanent record, we remember the forgiveness we have received.

This does not mean pretending difficult emotions are absent. We may feel anger, grief, fear, or frustration. Clothing ourselves in Christ means those feelings do not receive the final decision about how we will treat another person.

Love, Paul says, binds everything together. Love gives the other virtues direction. It asks what seeks the true good of the person before us.

Grace gives us a place at the Table. Then grace gives us something new to wear.

Walking the Way

Before entering an important conversation today, choose one quality from Colossians 3:12–14 that you want to “put on.”

Say its name quietly and ask the Spirit to shape your tone, posture, and response.

Prayer

Christ, clothe me in your compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. When strong emotions rise, let your character guide the way I treat the person before me. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What quality of Christ do I most need to put on for the relationships before me today?

Welcomed and Changed

Romans 12:1–2 (NRSVUE)

“Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” — Romans 12:2

Along the Way

A guest may enter a home and leave exactly as they arrived. A student enters a classroom expecting something different: to learn, practice, and become capable of what was not possible before.

Grace welcomes us as guests and receives us as disciples.

The Word for the Way

Paul describes transformation as the renewal of the mind. God changes the patterns through which we see ourselves, other people, and the world.

We may arrive believing worth must be earned. Grace teaches us to receive. We may divide people into insiders and outsiders. Grace widens the table. We may assume that faith belongs mainly to Sunday. Grace offers our whole lives to God.

Transformation is rarely immediate. Old habits resist new ways. The mind returns to familiar judgments. The heart protects old resentments. That does not mean grace has failed. It means renewal is a continuing work.

Christian community should be a place where people are welcomed before they are finished and lovingly encouraged not to remain where harm has held them. We need both truths. Welcome without transformation leaves wounds untouched. Transformation without welcome becomes rejection and shame.

In Christ, we are received and renewed. The One who says “Come” also says “Follow me.”

Walking the Way

Notice one thought pattern that repeatedly shapes your reactions: comparison, suspicion, fear, resentment, or the need to control.

Place that pattern before God and write one grace-shaped truth you want to practice instead.

Prayer

Renewing God, thank you for welcoming me before I am finished. Do not leave me trapped in patterns that harm me or others. Transform my mind so that my life increasingly reflects the grace I have received. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What pattern of thinking is grace inviting God to renew within me?

Whose Image Is This

Matthew 22:15–22 (NRSVUE)

“Whose head is this and whose title?” — Matthew 22:20

Along the Way

We recognize ownership through marks. A name written inside a book, a logo pressed into a tool, or an image stamped onto a coin tells us where something belongs.

Jesus asks his opponents to look closely at the mark they have been carrying.

The Word for the Way

The question about taxes is a trap. If Jesus rejects the tax, he can be accused of rebellion. If he supports it without qualification, he risks losing the trust of people suffering under Roman power.

Jesus asks for the coin. Caesar’s image and title are stamped upon it. Then Jesus says, “Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

The coin bears Caesar’s image. Human beings bear God’s image.

Jesus’ answer is larger than a lesson about money. Caesar may claim a coin, but Caesar cannot claim the deepest identity of a person made by God. No government, employer, achievement, failure, political party, diagnosis, or social label has the final word about who we are.

We belong to God.

That belonging is both comfort and calling. We are held by a love no earthly power can erase. We are also invited to give God what bears God’s image: our whole selves.

Walking the Way

Look in a mirror for a quiet moment and say, “I bear the image of God, and I belong to God.”

Carry that truth into one setting where another label has been defining you too strongly.

Prayer

Creator God, your image is marked upon my life. Free me from identities that diminish or control me. Let my deepest belonging be found in you, and teach me to offer my whole life in faithful response. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What label has been speaking more loudly than the truth that I bear God's image?

God Shows No Partiality

Acts 10:34–43 (NRSVUE)

“I truly understand that God shows no partiality.” — Acts 10:34

Along the Way

A door can be unlocked and still feel closed. People notice who is greeted warmly, whose ideas are trusted, who is interrupted, who is watched, and who must prove they belong.

Partiality often communicates itself through small repeated signals.

The Word for the Way

Peter speaks these words in the home of Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter had inherited clear boundaries about who was inside and who was outside. Then God sent him across one of those boundaries.

“God shows no partiality” is more than a general statement about kindness. It is Peter’s confession that God has corrected his vision.

Every person bears sacred worth. No race, nationality, income, age, ability, education, political identity, or history makes someone less visible to God.

The church can affirm that truth while still practicing partiality through assumptions and habits. We may gravitate toward people like us, trust familiar voices more quickly, or expect newcomers to cross every distance.

Grace asks us to notice. Whose experience have we dismissed? Whose absence no longer troubles us? Who has to work harder to be heard?

Peter’s transformation became visible when he entered the house. Insight crossed a threshold. Grace moved his feet.

Walking the Way

Think of someone whose background or experience differs from yours. Ask one sincere question and listen without preparing a reply.

Let curiosity replace assumption.

Prayer

Impartial God, correct the ways I see and the habits I fail to notice. Forgive me for partiality in thought, word, or action. Lead me across the boundaries that keep me from recognizing your image in another person. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Whose sacred worth might God be asking me to recognize more fully?

DAY 18 • SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

Whose Image Do You Bear

Matthew 22:15–22 (NRSVUE)

“Give...to God the things that are God’s.” — Matthew 22:21

Laity Sunday

Today’s Sermon

Whose Image Do You Bear? Grace That Claims Us

Along the Way

A church member once said, “I am not a minister. I only do what I can.” Yet week after week, that person visited someone who was lonely, prepared meals, prayed by name, and quietly carried the compassion of Christ into ordinary rooms.

The ministry was real even without a title.

The Word for the Way

Jesus asks his opponents to examine the image on the coin. Caesar’s image identifies the coin’s system. God’s image identifies the deepest claim upon every human life.

On Laity Sunday, we remember that ministry does not belong only to clergy. Laypeople are not simply helpers who fill positions within the church. They are disciples who carry the ministry of Jesus into homes, classrooms, hospitals, businesses, neighborhoods, kitchens, offices, farms, and community life.

God asks for more than what is in our pockets. We give God our abilities, relationships, decisions, time, influence, work, and service.

This does not require turning every conversation into a sermon. It means bearing God’s image faithfully wherever life places us. Honesty at work, compassion at home, courage in public life, patience with a child, advocacy for a neighbor, and service offered without applause can all become ministry.

The deeper question is not only, “What should I give?” It is, “Whose image do I bear, and what does that mean for the way I live?”

Before Worship

God, as I prepare for worship, remind me that I bear your image and share in Christ's ministry. Show me where my daily life can become a place of faithful service.

Walking the Way

Name one place outside the church building where God has positioned you to serve. Choose one way to carry the presence of Christ into that place this week.

Prayer

God who calls the whole church, thank you for placing your image upon every life and gifts within every disciple. Claim my daily work, relationships, and influence for your purposes. Let my life point toward you. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Where is God asking me to recognize my everyday life as a place of ministry?

You Belong to God

Isaiah 43:1–7 (NRSVUE)

“I have called you by name; you are mine.” — Isaiah 43:1

Along the Way

There are seasons when belonging feels uncertain. A role changes. A relationship ends. A familiar place no longer feels familiar. We wonder where we fit and whether anyone would notice our absence.

Into that uncertainty, God speaks our name.

The Word for the Way

Isaiah addresses people who have known displacement and fear. God does not begin by explaining every circumstance. God begins with identity: “I have called you by name; you are mine.”

Belonging to God does not promise a life without deep waters or fire. The passage names both. The promise is presence: “I will be with you.”

We often build identity from roles that can change. Parent. Spouse. Employee. Leader. Caregiver. Student. Healthy person. Needed person. Those roles matter, but none can carry the full weight of who we are.

Before every role and beneath every change, there is a name spoken by God.

You belong to God. Your worth is not suspended until you become more useful, certain, successful, or strong. Grace claims you now.

That secure belonging frees us to serve without trying to prove ourselves. We can offer our gifts without making applause the measure of faithfulness.

Walking the Way

Write your name after this sentence: “I have called you by name; you are mine.”

Read it slowly several times. Let the promise become louder than one role or circumstance that has been defining you.

Prayer

God who knows my name, thank you that my deepest belonging rests in you. Be with me in deep waters and uncertain seasons. Free me to live and serve from the security of your love. Amen.

Question for the Journey

How would I live differently today if I truly trusted that I belong to God?

More Than What Is in Your Pocket

Romans 12:1–8 (NRSVUE)

*“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” —
Romans 12:1*

Along the Way

When an offering is mentioned, our minds often go immediately to money. Financial generosity matters, but God’s claim upon us cannot be contained in a wallet.

God receives the life holding the wallet.

The Word for the Way

Paul urges believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. In biblical worship, a sacrifice was offered completely. Paul takes that language and applies it to the ordinary, ongoing life of a disciple.

We offer God our hands and what they make. We offer our voices and how they speak. We offer our minds, schedules, homes, abilities, attention, and influence. We offer the ways we vote, work, rest, spend, forgive, welcome, and serve.

A living sacrifice must be offered repeatedly. We may surrender our time in prayer and reclaim it through hurry before breakfast. We may offer our speech to God and use it carelessly by noon. Grace invites us to return.

Paul then speaks about different gifts within one body. Offering ourselves does not mean becoming identical. God receives the particular life we have been given and places it within a community where gifts serve one another.

God asks for more than what is in our pockets because God desires more than a transaction. God desires us.

Walking the Way

Choose one part of your ordinary life to offer intentionally to God today: your schedule, speech, hands, attention, work, or rest.

Before using it, pray, “God, let this belong to you.”

Prayer

Merciful God, I offer you more than a portion of what I possess. I offer the life you have given me. Receive my body, time, work, relationships, and gifts. Teach me to live as an offering of gratitude. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What part of my life have I kept outside the offering I make to God?

Created in God's Image

Genesis 1:26–31 (NRSVUE)

“God created humans in his image.” — Genesis 1:27

Along the Way

A photograph can be damaged without losing the identity of the person it depicts. Creases, stains, and tears may affect what we see, but the image remains.

Human lives can carry deep wounds and still bear the image of God.

The Word for the Way

Genesis places the image of God upon humanity before anyone has achieved, earned, produced, or proven anything. Sacred worth is given by the Creator.

This truth changes how we view ourselves. Our failures require honesty, but they do not erase the image. Our bodies may age or change, but they do not lose sacred worth. Our usefulness may be limited, yet our value remains.

The same truth changes how we view other people. The person who frustrates us bears God's image. The person whose politics, culture, ability, or story differs from ours bears God's image. The stranger, the prisoner, the child, the elder, the poor, and the powerful all stand beneath the Creator's declaration.

Recognizing the image of God does not mean approving every action. It means refusing to treat any person as disposable.

Grace becomes visible when our words, policies, ministries, and relationships protect the dignity God has already given.

Walking the Way

Notice the language you use about a person or group with whom you disagree. Remove words that deny dignity or reduce people to labels.

Practice speaking truth while still honoring the image of God.

Prayer

Creator God, thank you for placing your image upon every human life. Heal the ways I have diminished myself or others. Teach me to speak, serve, and act in ways that honor the dignity you have given. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Whose God-given dignity do my words or habits need to honor more carefully?

Ministry Beyond the Church Walls

Colossians 3:17 (NRSVUE)

*“Whatever you do...do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” —
Colossians 3:17*

Along the Way

Most of life happens outside a sanctuary. Meals are prepared, children are guided, decisions are made, customers are served, neighbors are greeted, and difficult conversations unfold in ordinary places.

Those places are not interruptions to ministry. They are often where ministry lives.

The Word for the Way

Paul’s phrase is remarkably wide: “Whatever you do.” He refuses to divide life into a sacred part that belongs to God and an ordinary part that does not.

Doing something in the name of Jesus means acting in a way consistent with his character and accountable to his presence. Can this decision carry his name? Does this conversation reflect his truth and grace? Does this work serve more than my own advantage?

We may never preach from a pulpit, yet our daily lives announce what we believe. The way we treat someone with less authority, respond to pressure, handle money, keep a promise, or care for a family member can reveal the grace of Christ.

This does not make every task dramatic. Much ministry is quiet and repeated. Faithfulness often looks like showing up again with love.

The church gathers for worship so that disciples can be formed and sent. The benediction is not the end of ministry. It is a sending into the places where grace must become visible.

Walking the Way

Choose one ordinary task you usually complete without much thought. Before beginning, pray, “Jesus, let me do this in your name.”

Notice how that prayer changes the spirit in which you work.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, claim the ordinary places of my life. Let my work, conversations, decisions, and care for others reflect your character. Send me beyond the church walls as a faithful witness to your grace. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What ordinary place in my life is God inviting me to recognize as a place of ministry?

Called to Serve

1 Peter 4:10–11 (NRSVUE)

“Whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies.” — 1 Peter 4:11

Along the Way

A person can serve faithfully and still become tired. Needs continue. Appreciation may be quiet. The work that began with joy can slowly become a burden carried alone.

Scripture does not ask servants to pretend they have limitless strength.

The Word for the Way

Peter joins two truths: use the gift you have received, and serve with the strength God supplies.

We need both. The call to serve keeps grace from becoming self-centered. Dependence upon God keeps service from becoming self-sufficient.

Some people serve until resentment replaces love. They struggle to say no, receive help, or admit weariness. Others hold back because they fear they cannot do enough. Peter offers a healthier way. Serve from grace, within the community, using what God has given, relying on what God supplies.

The body of Christ needs shared ministry. When one person carries everything, others are denied the opportunity to offer their gifts. Asking for help can be an act of stewardship.

Rest can also be faithful. Jesus withdrew to pray. Sabbath reminds us that the vineyard belongs to God even when we stop working.

We are called to serve, not to become the Savior. Christ already holds that place.

Walking the Way

Consider your service honestly. If you have been holding back, take one step forward. If you have been carrying too much, ask one person to share the work or identify a needed boundary.

Serve from grace, not guilt.

Prayer

God who calls and sustains, show me where to serve and where to receive help. Protect me from both reluctance and resentment. Supply the strength I need and teach me to trust the gifts you have placed in others. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What would it look like for me to serve faithfully without acting as though everything depends on me?

DAY 24 • SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

A Life That Points to God

Matthew 5:13–16 (NRSVUE)

*“They may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” —
Matthew 5:16*

Along the Way

A road sign fulfills its purpose by directing attention away from itself. A beautifully painted sign that leaves travelers staring at the sign instead of finding the road has failed.

Christian service also has a direction.

The Word for the Way

Jesus says that visible good works should lead others to give glory to God. The work matters, and so does where the work points.

We naturally appreciate encouragement. Gratitude can strengthen people who serve. The danger comes when recognition becomes the reason we act or the measure of whether service mattered.

Some of the most Christlike acts will never be announced. A prayer offered in private, a ride quietly provided, a gift known only to the recipient, a difficult apology, or patient care repeated day after day may receive little public attention.

God sees.

A life that points to God does not erase the person serving. It reveals the source of the love. We can receive thanks without pretending we acted alone: “I am grateful I could help. God has been gracious to me.”

Tomorrow we will come to the heart of it all: love of God and neighbor. Today we ask whether our lives make that love easier to see.

Walking the Way

Complete one act of service today that does not need to be announced. If someone thanks you, receive it graciously and quietly remember the Source of every good gift.

Prayer

God of every good work, purify my motives and receive my service. Keep me from needing applause, and let the good others see in my life point beyond me to your grace. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Does the way I serve draw attention mainly to me, or does it help someone see the goodness of God?

DAY 25 • SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25

The Heart of It All

Matthew 22:34–40 (NRSVUE)

“You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbor as yourself.” — Matthew 22:37–39

Reformation Sunday and Baptism Sunday

Today’s Sermon

The Heart of It All: Grace That Loves

Along the Way

When many responsibilities compete for attention, a clear center helps us decide what matters most. Without that center, we can become busy with good things while neglecting the reason they matter.

Jesus brings the life of faith back to its center: love God and love your neighbor.

The Word for the Way

The lawyer asks Jesus to identify the greatest commandment. Jesus joins love of God and love of neighbor so closely that we cannot separate devotion from the way we treat people.

Today Friendship celebrates Reformation Sunday and KJ’s baptism. Both moments bring us back to grace.

Reformation is not change for its own sake. The church continually returns to the gospel and allows God to correct, renew, and redirect us so that Christ may be seen more clearly.

Baptism gives us a living picture of grace received before it can be understood or earned. KJ is surrounded by promises: God’s promise of steadfast love and the congregation’s promise to nurture, pray, teach, surround, and walk with him and his family.

Those vows make love visible. Love is more than affection felt in a sacred moment. Love becomes a promise practiced over time.

At the heart of the commandments, the church, baptism, discipleship, and reformation is love. If our faith does not help us love God more deeply and our neighbors more faithfully, we have missed the heart of it all.

Before Worship

God of grace, as I prepare for worship, bring me back to the heart of the gospel. Renew your church, surround KJ and his family with love, and help me practice the promises we make together.

Walking the Way

Choose one way to practice today's congregational vows beyond the sanctuary. Pray for KJ and his family, encourage a parent, support a child or youth, or offer your presence to someone growing in faith.

Prayer

God of covenant love, renew your church and renew my heart. Bless KJ and his family, and make Friendship faithful in the promises we offer. Teach me to love you with all I am and to love my neighbor through actions that endure. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What promise of love is God asking me to practice, not merely feel?

Loving God with All We Are

Deuteronomy 6:4–9 (NRSVUE)

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” — Deuteronomy 6:5

Along the Way

We sometimes think of love as a feeling that arrives on its own. Scripture speaks of love as an orientation of the whole life: remembered, taught, repeated, and practiced in ordinary places.

Love becomes a way of living.

The Word for the Way

The command in Deuteronomy is addressed to the whole person: heart, soul, and strength. God is not asking for a religious corner of life. God desires an integrated life centered in love.

The passage places this love within daily rhythms. Speak of it at home and along the road, when lying down and rising. Teach it to children. Place reminders where life is lived.

Yesterday’s baptism made this communal responsibility visible. Faith is passed forward through repeated acts: prayers at bedtime, stories told, questions welcomed, worship shared, meals blessed, forgiveness practiced, and service offered together.

We do not control another person’s faith. We create an environment where love for God can be seen, heard, questioned, and practiced.

Wholehearted love does not require constant intensity. It requires direction. When attention wanders, we return. When love becomes routine, we remember. When we fail, grace brings us home.

Walking the Way

Choose one ordinary daily rhythm as a place to remember God: waking, driving, eating, beginning work, or preparing for sleep.

Attach a brief prayer of love and gratitude to that rhythm for the rest of the week.

Prayer

Lord our God, gather my divided attention and teach me to love you with all I am. Let faith take root in the ordinary rhythms of my life, and help me pass your love forward with patience and sincerity. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What daily practice could help love for God become more deeply woven into my life?

Who Is My Neighbor

Luke 10:25–37 (NRSVUE)

“Which of these three...was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” — Luke 10:36

Along the Way

The lawyer asks for a boundary: “Who is my neighbor?” He wants to know where responsibility ends.

Jesus answers with a story about someone who crossed the road toward suffering.

The Word for the Way

A man lies wounded. Religious travelers see him and pass by. A Samaritan, someone the original hearers would have viewed with suspicion, comes near and is moved with compassion.

Jesus shifts the question. Instead of defining which people qualify as neighbors, he asks what it means to become a neighbor.

The Samaritan’s compassion becomes practical. He approaches, treats wounds, provides transportation, pays for care, and plans to return. Love uses what is available.

The story does not romanticize service. Becoming a neighbor costs time, attention, money, and interruption. The Samaritan allows another person’s need to change his schedule.

We cannot respond to every need in the same way. Wisdom and boundaries remain important. Yet we can become so protected from interruption that compassion never gets close enough to act.

The wounded person in the road may appear as a neighbor facing illness, a family under strain, a newcomer needing guidance, or a community carrying a burden we have learned to drive past.

Jesus concludes, “Go and do likewise.”

Walking the Way

Pay attention to one interruption today. Before dismissing it, ask whether compassion is inviting you closer.

Offer the help that is honestly within your reach.

Prayer

Compassionate Jesus, forgive me for the roads I cross to avoid another person's need. Give me wisdom, courage, and mercy. Teach me to become a neighbor through love that comes near and takes action. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Whose need have I learned to notice without allowing it to interrupt me?

Love Takes Action

1 John 3:16–18 (NRSVUE)

“Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” — 1 John 3:18

Along the Way

“Let me know if you need anything” is usually sincere. Yet a person in pain may not know what to request, may feel uncomfortable asking, or may lack the strength to organize help.

Love sometimes needs to become more specific.

The Word for the Way

First John points to Jesus as the shape of love. Christ laid down his life. Christian love therefore moves beyond sentiment toward self-giving action.

The writer gives a concrete example: if we see a brother or sister in need and close our heart, something is missing. Love pays attention to what it has and what another person lacks.

We may not be able to solve the whole problem. We can bring a meal, make a call, offer transportation, sit through a difficult hour, contribute to a need, speak on someone’s behalf, or complete a task that has become overwhelming.

Specific love is often more helpful than dramatic love. “I can bring dinner on Tuesday” may serve better than a general offer. “I can sit with you during the appointment” gives compassion a time and place.

Truth also belongs to love. Action without listening can become controlling. We ask what would genuinely help rather than assuming we know.

Grace becomes visible when love develops hands, feet, a calendar, and a plan.

Walking the Way

Think of someone carrying a burden. Replace a general intention with one specific offer you can keep.

Ask respectfully, “Would this be helpful?” Then follow through.

Prayer

God of active love, move my compassion beyond kind thoughts and general promises. Help me listen well, offer what is truly helpful, and follow through faithfully. Let your love take visible form through me. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What loving intention needs a specific action, time, or commitment?

Passing Faith Forward

Deuteronomy 34:1–12 (NRSVUE)

“Joshua...was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him.” — Deuteronomy 34:9

Along the Way

No one serves forever in the same role. A teacher eventually watches a student lead. A parent releases responsibility to an adult child. A leader prepares someone else to carry work that once depended upon them.

Faithfulness includes knowing how to pass something forward.

The Word for the Way

Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses and the emergence of Joshua. Moses' life and leadership were unique, yet God's work did not end with him.

Joshua had been formed through years of shared experience. Moses laid hands upon him, and the people were called to recognize new leadership.

Passing faith forward requires more than leaving instructions. It involves relationship, trust, encouragement, opportunity, and room for another person to lead differently.

Churches can honor the past without demanding that the future repeat it exactly. Reformation reminds us that faithfulness sometimes requires new forms so that the same gospel can be seen clearly in a changing time.

KJ's baptism also placed this responsibility before Friendship. The congregation promised to surround a child with a community of love and forgiveness. Those promises are kept through people who teach, model, listen, invite, and make room.

We all received something from people who came before us. Grace asks what we will place into the hands of those who follow.

Walking the Way

Name one person in a younger generation or a newer season of faith whom you can encourage.

Share one lesson, offer one opportunity, or express confidence in a gift you see developing.

Prayer

Faithful God of every generation, thank you for those who passed faith to me. Give me humility to release control, wisdom to encourage emerging gifts, and love to make room for those who will serve after me. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What faith, wisdom, or opportunity is God asking me to pass forward?

The Spirit Has Been Poured Out

Acts 10:44–48 (NRSVUE)

“The Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.” — Acts 10:44

Along the Way

People sometimes build a gate after God has already opened the way. We create requirements, question readiness, or protect familiar boundaries while the Spirit is already at work on the other side.

Peter learns to recognize what God is doing before giving instructions about what God should do.

The Word for the Way

While Peter is still speaking in the home of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit falls upon the Gentiles. The Jewish believers are astonished because the gift of the Spirit has crossed a boundary they assumed would remain.

Peter asks, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people?” Baptism becomes a visible sign of the grace God has already poured out.

This passage speaks beautifully after KJ’s baptism. In baptism we trust God’s initiative. Grace surrounds a child before he can explain it, earn it, or understand its depth. The church then promises to help him grow into the gift he has received.

Acts also challenges us to notice the Spirit beyond our expectations. God may be working in people, places, and forms of ministry we did not anticipate.

Discernment matters. Yet discernment begins with attention, not control. Where do we see the fruit of the Spirit? Where are people being drawn toward Christ, justice, mercy, and love?

The Spirit is not confined by the boundaries of our imagination.

Walking the Way

Think of a person or ministry you have been quick to question because it feels unfamiliar. Look for evidence of the Spirit’s fruit before focusing on difference.

Ask God for humility to recognize grace already at work.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, forgive me when I try to confine your work to what I already understand. Open my eyes to grace beyond familiar boundaries. Help Friendship nurture the promises of baptism and follow where you lead. Amen.

Question for the Journey

Where might the Spirit already be at work beyond the boundaries of my expectations?

Still Being Made New

2 Corinthians 5:14–21 (NRSVUE)

“If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.” — 2 Corinthians 5:17

Along the Way

The end of a month can feel like a finish line. We look back, mark what was completed, and move toward what comes next.

But the Christian life is not a project we complete. It is a life continually renewed in Christ.

The Word for the Way

Thirty-one days ago, we moved from walking the way of grace toward living what we believe.

We discovered that grace bears fruit because the vineyard belongs to God. Grace invites and transforms because there is room at Christ's Table. Grace claims us because we bear God's image. Grace loves because love of God and neighbor stands at the heart of faithful life.

Paul declares that in Christ there is a new creation. The verb carries continuing hope. God is not finished with us.

There are habits still being renewed, relationships still being healed, gifts still being discovered, and boundaries still being crossed. The church is still being reformed. Baptismal promises are still being practiced. Love is still learning how to take action.

The devotional ends today. The work of grace does not.

We do not carry the month forward by attempting all thirty-one practices at once. We listen for the next faithful step. The same grace that called us also sustains us.

Grace is received in the heart and revealed through the life. By the power of Christ, that life is still being made new.

Walking the Way

Look back over the month and choose one practice you want to continue: cultivating fruit, making room, remembering whose image you bear, serving through your gifts, or putting love into action.

Complete this sentence: "With God's grace, I will continue making grace visible by..."

Prayer

God of new creation, thank you for every way your grace has met me this month. Continue renewing my mind, relationships, service, and love. Let what I have received in my heart become visible through the life I live. Amen.

Question for the Journey

What is the next faithful way God is inviting grace to become visible through my life?

The Journey Continues

Grace bears fruit.

Grace invites and transforms.

Grace claims us.

Grace loves.

The thirty-one days are complete.

The work of grace is not.

Grace is received in the heart and revealed through the life.