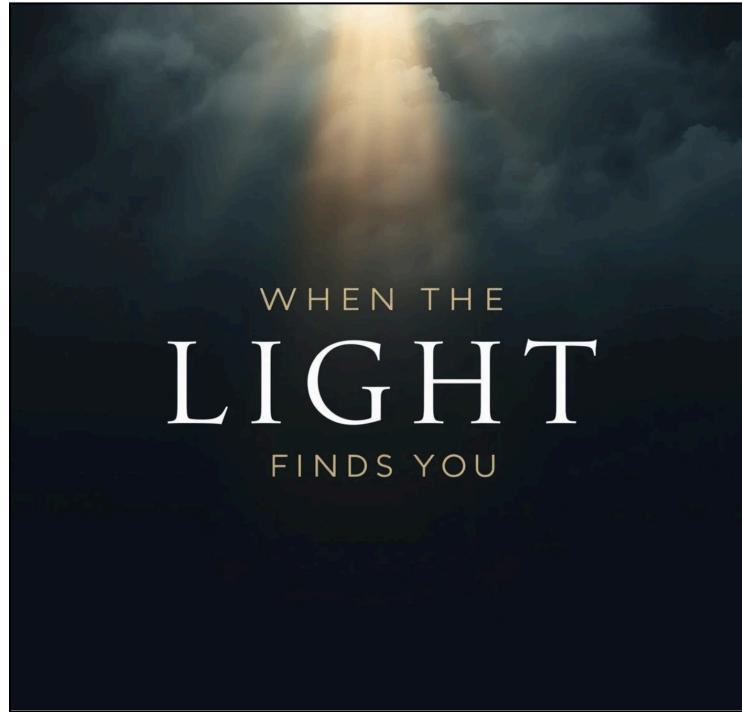


**Faith Bible Study Guide
For the Week of January 25, 2026
Third Sunday after Epiphany Sunday
“When The Light Finds You”**



Be still [2 Minutes]: As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

CENTERING WORDS/ WORDS TO PONDER:

Today and every day, Jesus says, “Come, Follow me.” Today and everyday, let us answer, “You, Lord Jesus, are the one we seek.”

OPENING PRAYER: Inviting God, help us to hear Jesus calling us and help us to follow him. In Christ, your kingdom draws near to us, whether we are seeking it or not. When we are caught up in our anguish, you shine a great light in our darkness. When we face days full of trouble, you shelter us. When we are at odds with others, quarreling and breaking apart into factions, you save us with the unity won by Christ through the cross and his resurrection. Whether we face danger or are at ease in our routines – the kingdom of heaven draws near and Jesus says: “Now is the time to follow me.” You hear us, God, when we cry out to you. May we hear you this day when you cry out to us. Amen.

Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]

1. Take a deep breath. How is it with your soul?

2. If your week had a weather forecast, what would it be—and why?
3. Where have you noticed light recently—however small, delayed, or fleeting?
4. Are you in a season of casting nets, mending nets, or leaving nets behind?

Be the Word: Scripture Lesson: Matthew 4:12-23, Isaiah 9:1-4

Matthew 4:12-23

12 Now when Jesus heard that John was arrested, he went to Galilee. **13** He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, which lies alongside the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. **14** This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said:

15 *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,
16 the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light,
and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and in shadow of death.* **[a]** **17** From that time Jesus began to announce, “Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!”

18 As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. **19** “Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” **20** Right away, they left their nets and followed him. **21** Continuing on, he saw another set of brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father repairing their nets. Jesus called them and **22** immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. **23** Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people. Nonetheless, those who were in distress won’t be exhausted. At an earlier time, God cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but later he glorified the way of the sea, the far side of the Jordan, and the Galilee of the nations. **[b]**

2 **[c]** The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

3 You have made the nation great;
you have increased its joy.

They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,
as those who divide plunder rejoice.

4 As on the day of Midian, you’ve shattered the yoke that burdened
them, the staff on their shoulders,
and the rod of their oppressor.

Isaiah 9:1-4

Nonetheless, those who were in distress won’t be exhausted. At an earlier time, God cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but later he glorified the way of the sea, the far side of the Jordan, and the Galilee of the nations. **[b]**

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them, the staff on their shoulders,
and the rod of their oppressor.

L: The word of God for all People.

P: Thanks be to God.

Be rooted: [Bible Study]

Grounding ourselves in Scripture

Isaiah 9:1–4 — Light in the Midst of Darkness

Isaiah speaks to a people who know trauma intimately. Zebulun and Naphtali were northern territories that had experienced invasion, displacement, and cultural erasure under Assyrian rule. These lands were not only militarily defeated; they were socially stigmatized—viewed as compromised, mixed, and spiritually suspect.

Isaiah does not deny this history. Instead, he names it and then reframes it. The prophet proclaims that **the very places once shamed will be the first places glorified**. God's movement begins not at the center of religious or political power, but at the margins where loss has already reshaped life.

The grammar matters: *“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.”* The people are still walking. Darkness is not resolved before God acts. Divine intervention does not require closure or healing first.

When Isaiah speaks of breaking the yoke, the bar across shoulders, and the rod of the oppressor, he evokes systems of domination—economic, political, and psychological. This is not only personal comfort; it is communal liberation. Biblical light confronts structures that keep people bent low.

Key insight: God's light does not erase history—it redeems it. What was wounded becomes the site of God's glory.

Brueggemann, Walter. The Prophetic Imagination. Fortress Press. (For understanding prophetic hope, trauma, and God's disruptive light.)

Brueggemann, Walter. Isaiah 1–39. Westminster John Knox Press. (Historical and theological context for Isaiah 9.)

Matthew 4:12–23 — Jesus Begins in the Shadows

Matthew is intentional about timing and geography. Jesus begins his public ministry *after* John the Baptist is arrested—an act of state violence meant to silence a prophetic voice. The gospel does not gloss over this trauma. It places Jesus' call squarely in its

aftermath.

Rather than seeking safety or legitimacy in Jerusalem, Jesus goes to Galilee—occupied territory, heavily taxed, and closely monitored by imperial power. Galilee was a place where people lived with daily reminders of who controlled their land, labor, and bodies. Matthew names this as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: light does not avoid contested ground.

Jesus' first proclamation—“*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*”—is often misheard as moral correction. In its original sense, repent (*metanoia*) means a change of mind, a reorientation of one's whole life toward a new reality. The kingdom does not arrive after repentance; repentance is the response to God already drawing near.

When Jesus calls the fishermen, he interrupts ordinary labor shaped by imperial economics. Fishing in Galilee was tightly controlled; nets, boats, and catches were often taxed. Leaving nets behind is not romantic—it is risky. James and John are described as mending nets, an image of repair, continuity, and inherited livelihood. Jesus calls them mid-repair, not after completion.

Key insight: Jesus does not call the prepared; he calls the present. Discipleship begins in disruption, not certainty.

Carter, Warren. *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*. Orbis Books. (Galilee, empire, and Matthew's political theology.)

Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. InterVarsity Press. (Historical background on Galilee, fishing economies, and Roman occupation.)

Wright, N. T. *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1*. SPCK. (Accessible commentary on Matthew 1–15.)

González, Justo L. *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes*. Abingdon Press. (Reading Scripture from the margins.)

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV. Oxford University Press. (Primary biblical text and scholarly notes.)

Discussion:

1. What stands out to you in Isaiah's description of light and darkness?
2. Why do you think Matthew emphasizes where and when Jesus begins his ministry?
3. How does understanding “repent” as *turning* (not shaming) change how you hear Jesus' call?
4. Where do you see God choosing presence over power in these texts?
5. Why do you think Matthew makes it clear that Jesus begins his ministry after John's arrest?
6. What does it mean for Jesus to choose Galilee instead of Jerusalem as his starting place?
7. James and John are called while mending nets. Where in your life are things still being repaired?

Living the Scripture in real time

These Scriptures remind us that faith is not polished—it is lived. God's light meets us in grief, injustice, transition, and unfinished stories.

Reflection & Application:

1. Where in your life do you feel like you are still “walking in darkness,” not yet finished or resolved?
2. What might it look like to turn—even slightly—toward the light in that place?
3. Are there “nets” you are being invited to loosen your grip on (fear, apathy, comfort, silence)?
4. Who around you is living in a Galilee place—overlooked, vulnerable, or hurting—and how might you show up with love?

Listen to “Lift Up Your Head” by Esabalu:
<https://youtu.be/DipIx-VPrmE?si=BQ2APfRDuGPfFt-Q>

Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]:

Love in Action (Choose One)

- Practice **presence** this week: sit with someone’s grief or story without trying to fix it.
- Practice **attention**: notice where injustice or vulnerability is visible in your community.
- Practice **turning**: take one faithful next step—however small—toward compassion, courage, or service.

Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:



*We lift up prayers for all of God's
Creation. Lord Hear our Prayers.*

continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness		those in Community Living & Homecare	
Rev. Alan Mark	Emi Hino	Kian Tehrani	Priscilla Kandel
Alice Kajiyा	Ernie Santiago	Kiki Hashimoto	Chic Miyake
Alvena Fukuhara	Faith Tanaka	Kim Foster	Raquel M. Martinez
Amy Higa	Florence Nakakura	Kraig Nakano	Rev. Mike Hirunuma
Anthony Anderson, Sr.	Frank Sato	Rev. Kim Montenegro	Ron Hamaguchi
Apolosi Lokotui	Fred Oshiro	Kelsey DeGracia	Rick Kataki
Audrey Goto	Geri Shiraki	Kenny Medeiros	Ruth Hirata
Austin Maeda	Glenn and Millie	Kyle Ichikawa	Ruth Taira
Barbara Tamura	Shimizu	Larry Takumi	Sandra Minjarez
Betty Kobata	Grace Tochihara	Layne Nakasone	Grange
Bill Morris	Grant Hanada	Linda Jung	Sandy Uyeunten
Brian Okumura	Harriet Tateyama	Liz Harner	Scarlett Boni
Cam Bruns	Haru Yasunaga	Lucas Yniguez	Stan Miyasato
Chic Miyake	Hisako Shohara	Marion Antoku	Steph Matsunaga
Christine Kein	Ingrid Peterson	Mae Nakokihara	Sue Hamada
Clarett Foster	Irene Munesato	Mary Jung	Sue Hasegawa
Dan Segawa	Jack Honda	Mary & Bob Kelly	Susan DeGracia
Danny Tokudomi	Jayne Watanabe	[siblings]	Susan Mizuki
Dan Yamashita	Jehiel Vinluan	Mary Marchand	for the Leadership of our Country and our Churches
Deron Tokishi	Jerry Osaka	Mary Tamura	Takai Finau
Diane & Destiny Ueda-Banda	Joanne Sato	Mary Tamura [Tsutsui]	Theresa Apicella
Dr. Do-Ann Tsuneyo Kaneko	Jordan Sasaki	Maxine Butcher	for the immigrants: migrants, refugees, asylees
Dr. Nguyen Elaine Yoshida	Joye Barker	Mutsuko Nishi	Tom Fukuhara
Eleanor Ngai	Juliet Koyanagi	Nancy Matsushima	Tommy Sakaguchi
for All Our Saints		Victoria DeLaTorre	Tselyli Mantooth
The Sato family on the passing of Terry Sato (neighbors of Pearl and Mel Iizuka, friends of Iseri and Sasaki families) (1/1/26).		Walker Wilkerson	for our siblings in Christ who struggle and in need of God's care
The Kwan-Magsayo family, on the passing of Kelly's grandma, Grace Magsayo.		Wayne Shimizu	Whitney Nakayama
The Kinoshita family on the passing of Thomas Kinoshita. Celebration of Life: January 31, 2026, 11am.		Pam Fink	for those who live in through wars, unrest, and violence
Keith Tokuhara and family on the passing of Keith's aunt, Helen Nozaki (1/6/26). Celebration of Life: March 7, 2026, 2pm.		Kenny Medeiros	for those suffering and rebuilding after national disasters and man-made catastrophes
Rev. John Miyahara and the Ishihara family, on the passing of John's cousin, Tim Ishihara (12/13/25).		Patty Kobayashi	Winnie Osaki
Baby Adeline "Andie" Jane Yamamoto born to parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto on January 2, 2026. Proud Great-Grandma is Jane Kiyohara, whom Andie is also named after!		UPDATED 1.16.2026	

Celebrations:

- Baby Adeline "Andie" Jane Yamamoto, proud parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto; great-granddaughter of Jane Kiyohara (1/2/26)
- Ryden Richard Wilkerson, proud grandparents, Teresa Sato and Rick Wilkerson (1/14/26)
- New Members! We welcome Risa Vargas and Stephanie Matsunaga!
- Retirement for Rev. Keith & Viki Inouye

Birthdays:

Scarlett Bone (1/21–Sweet 16)

For healing and recovery

- This week asking for prayers for:

FEEL BETTER SOON!

- Sandy Uyeunten
- Donna Iki
- Kenny Medeiros
- Pam Fink
- Diane Ueda-Banda
- Victoria DelaTorre
- Dan Yamashita
- Takai Finau
- Kraig Nakano **
- Alvena Fukuhara & Tom
- Mae Nakahara
- Mary Tamuras (Kevin Tsutsui's g'ma on hospice)
- Jennie Shitakubo
- Douglas and Corinne Higa (Lynne Vinluan's parents)
- Apolosi Lokotui
- Jehiel Vinluan
- Dan Yamashita
- Activists/Demonstrators in MN: Renee Good and most recently Alex Jeffrey Petti (in senseless killings) and the 100 clergy who stood together and were detained

- Always: Rev. Alan, Harriet, Victoria, Larry, Audrey, the Shimizus, Winnie, Tseyli, Walker, Nancy, Mary, Ruth, Faith, Irene, Tak, Winnie, Nobie...many who are homebound and those unable to be with us... and so many other that we all that we miss their presence next to us in the sanctuary and our groups.

- Frank Sato
- Mary & Bob Kiely (siblings of Ann Kiely)
- Audrey Goto recovery
- Alice Kajiya
- Larry Takumi
- Harriet Tateyama
- Tseyli Mantooth
- Kim Foster & Claretta Foster
- Walker Wilkerson
- Kiki Hashimoto (Sue Kunisaki -friend)
- Rev's friends: Stan Miyasato, Darin Arntson, (Norma, Ashley)
- Susan Slade's friend, Sherrie
- Raquel Martinez (Julie's goddaughter)
- Mrs. Davis (friend of Kim Foster); lifting

up her caregiving daughter and granddaughter

Traveling Mercies

- Nargis Basu - Traveling to India for 3 months

World Concerns:

- All who struggle, suffer, experience pain and grief...
- US government; restoration of benefits, medical, food stamps, social security...
- War-torn countries, Natural disasters...
- Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees losing rights and protections...
- Health Care system
- The homeless and impoverished
- The people of Venezuela and Nigeria
- Leadership (including clergy)

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

- Kelly Kwan & Peg Tadakuma on the passing of Kelly's grandma, Grace Magsayo
- Family of Terry Sato (passed 1/1/26) (Neighbor Izuka's, Friends of Jason and Iseri's)
- Helen Nozaki (aunt of Keith Tokuhara) - Celebration of Life, March 7, 2026, 2pm
- Thomas Kinoshita (community) - Celebration of Life, January 31, 2026, 11am
- Rev. John Miyahara and the Ishihara family on the passing of Dorothy's son (100yo), Tim Ishihara (12/13/25)
- Fred Matsuyama
- Kraig Nakano

And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing

Go now, beloved, and walk in the light that meets you in the midst of your darkness. May the God of hope guide your steps, steady your hearts, and call you to follow with courage, even when the way is uncertain. And may the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, go with you today and always. Amen.