

**Faith Bible Study Guide**  
**For the Week of March 22, 2026**  
**Fifth Sunday in Lent**  
**“Tell Me Something Good: The Good News is...**  
**Rooted in Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness**



**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:**

**The Things That Matter Most** by Rev. Sarah Speed

I wrecked the family car, an old gold minivan  
that had traveled every inch of I-95. It had worn cushions  
and an old school map in the glove box.

It held a folder full of mix CDs under the passenger seat  
and every memory of every family trip,  
and I wrecked it.

I called the tow truck while the engine  
hissed and smoked. I called my dad,  
my own apologies tripping over themselves  
to get to the front of the line.

I expected to be grounded.

I expected a “How could you?”

But when I got home that night,  
my dad held me close and said,

“A car is just a car, but you are my child.

The only thing that matters is that you are okay.”

And I knew it for what it was.

It was mercy. It was love.

It was the thing that mattered most.

**OPENING PRAYER:**

Holy One, when you speak, we don't want to miss it.

When you bend down and write in the dirt, when you move through the trees,  
when you wake with the dawn, when you tug on our heart, or whisper into our dreams,  
we don't want to miss it. So today we pray, clear out the cobwebs in our ears.

Quiet the steady stream of thoughts marching through our minds. Open up space in our hearts so  
that we can receive your word for us today. With hope we pray. Amen.

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

1. Take a breath. Feel your body in the chair. How is it with your soul today?

*Feel free to answer several questions (or briefly all)...*

2. **“Tell me something good.”**

*Where have you seen even a small glimpse of goodness, mercy, or hope this past week—especially in a hard situation?*

3. **A moment of being spared**

*Can you remember a time when you received mercy instead of judgment?*

*How did that moment shape you or soften something in you?*

4. **Stones we carry**

*Where do you notice yourself holding a “stone” right now—toward someone else, a situation, or even yourself?*

5. **The nudge to put it down**

*Have you experienced a moment when you felt prompted to pause, listen, or let go of being “right”? What happened in you when you did (or didn’t)?*

6. **Justice beyond the individual**

*When you think about justice in your community or the world, what situations come to mind where the issue is bigger than one person?*

7. **Living the good news**

*What might it look like, in one small and concrete way this week, to live out justice, mercy, or faithfulness?*

***Lent invites honesty, not performance.***

**Be the Word: Scripture Lessons:** John 8:2-11; Matthew 23:23

**John 8:2-11**

Common English Bible

**2** Early in the morning he returned to the temple. All the people gathered around him, and he sat down and taught them. **3** The legal experts and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. Placing her in the center of the group, **4** they said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. **5** In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone women like this. What do you say?” **6** They said this to test him, because they wanted a reason to bring an accusation against him. Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger.

**7** They continued to question him, so he stood up and replied, “Whoever hasn’t sinned should throw the first stone.” **8** Bending down again, he wrote on the ground. **9** Those who heard him went away, one by one, beginning with the elders. Finally, only Jesus and the woman were left in the middle of the crowd.

**10** Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Is there no one to condemn you?”

**11** She said, “No one, sir.”<sup>[a]</sup>

Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, don’t sin anymore.”<sup>[b]</sup>

**Matthew 23:23**

**23** “How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You give to God a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, but you forget about the more important matters of the Law: justice, peace, and faith. You ought to give a tenth but without forgetting about those more important matters.

L: The word of God for all People.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

## Be rooted: [Bible Study]

### The Series at a Glance

#### Lent

ASH WED	1ST SUN IN LENT	2ND SUN IN LENT	3RD SUN IN LENT	4TH SUN IN LENT	5TH SUN IN LENT
The good news is... all are invited	The good news is... so good it catches us by surprise	The good news is... great love for God and neighbor	The good news is... together, the impossible is possible	The good news is... protection and care for the vulnerable	The good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, and faithfulness
<u>Luke 14:15-24</u> <i>(Parable of the wedding banquet)</i>	<u>John 2:1-11</u> <i>(Wedding at Cana)</i> <u>Matthew 13:31-32</u> <i>(Parable of the mustard seed)</i>	<u>Luke 7:36-50</u> <i>(Woman with the alabaster jar washes Jesus' feet)</i> <u>Matthew 25:35-40</u> <i>("Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me")</i>	<u>Mark 6:32-44</u> <i>(Feeding of the 5,000)</i> <u>Ephesians 3:20-21</u> <i>("By the power at work within us [God] is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine")</i>	<u>Matthew 19:13-15</u> <i>(Jesus blesses the children)</i> <u>Deuteronomy 24:17-22</u> <i>(Care for the alien, the orphan, and the widow)</i>	<u>John 8:2-11</u> <i>(Jesus refuses to condemn a woman caught in adultery)</i> <u>Matthew 23:23</u> <i>("You have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness.")</i>

#### Holy Week

PALM / PASSION SUNDAY	MAUNDY THURSDAY	GOOD FRIDAY	EASTER SUNDAY
The good news is... inspiring us to act	The good news is... even Judas gets his feet washed	The good news is... revealed through nonviolence	The good news is... alive in the world
<u>Mark 11:1-11</u> <i>(Triumphal entry into Jerusalem)</i>	<u>John 13:1-35</u> <i>(Jesus washes the disciples' feet)</i>	<u>Luke 22:47-53; Luke 23:33-38, 44-46</u> <i>(Judas' betrayal; Jesus heals the servant's ear after his disciples draw swords; Jesus forgives those crucifying him)</i>	<u>Matthew 28:1-10</u> <i>("Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me.")</i>

**Focal scriptures** John 8:2-11; Matthew 23:23

#### Theme connections

As we move toward Holy Week, we acknowledge the ways Jesus' ministry was increasingly at odds with the religious leaders who prioritized loyalty to legality and perceived Jesus' teachings as a threat. While Jesus is teaching in the Temple, some scribes and Pharisees interrupt Jesus to put both him—and a woman caught in adultery—on trial. Their questioning intensifies as they cite Mosaic Law and put the woman's fate in Jesus' hands. Instead of focusing on punishment, Jesus flips the script and invites each person to consider their own sin; Jesus defuses the spectacle by condemning no one. Much of Jesus' teachings were grounded in his understanding of the Torah; however, many of his actions called for reinterpreting the law. As we wrestle with our own rules, we should ask, "What is the most just, merciful, and faithful interpretation?"

#### Considerations for this week

While there are so many stories we wanted to include in this series, we decided that, in order to transition into Holy Week, this Sunday should highlight the rising tensions between Jesus and the established religious authorities who perceived him as a threat. We chose this story because of the compelling way Jesus thwarts the trap of the religious leaders, cleverly transforming a lose-lose situation into one that centers the humanity and dignity of a woman caught in between. While the scribes and Pharisees appear to be focused on legalism, Jesus is focused on transformation—for the woman caught in adultery but also for every person present at the

spectacle. We hope this week provides ample opportunities to explore how we too can honor the laws and regulations that order our religious communities and societies while also remembering that mercy, justice, and faithfulness should be at the heart of every rule. One note of caution: while Jesus is defying the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees in this story, it's important in your preaching not to inadvertently cast all Jewish law as inherently legalistic or rigid (which is certainly not the case, and in fact Judaism has a rich history of holding Written and Oral Torah together to interpret and reevaluate the law). Preachers can discuss the ways Jesus challenged religious authority while not using language that reinforces supersessionism. Lastly, this story is rich with imaginative possibilities, including the future of the woman who is saved from the stoning. What do you think happens to her afterward? Is she "released" like the woman with the alabaster jar? Does she return to her marriage, or seek divorce? Does she steer clear of any infraction that could put her back into the hands of the authorities? What might it look like for her to move forward with justice, mercy, and faithfulness? When we center real human lives in deliberations of the law, perhaps it will be easier to access mercy and pursue justice.

### **Commentary:**

## Commentary on John 8:2-11; Matthew 23:23

by Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail

### ***The Inconvenience of Mercy***

The inconvenience of mercy is that it's hardly ever merited.

But good grief, does Jesus talk ad nauseam about mercy in the Bible; perhaps most famously telling his disciples—to their great chagrin—they must forgive their siblings seventy-seven times for the same sin (Matthew 18:21-22). He calls the merciful blessed in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:7). And then there are his words as he is dying, on a cross, surrounded by criminals and his weeping mother and the mob that lynched him: "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). In John 8:2-11, he embodies mercy with a woman whom I am rather inclined to think has received little mercy in her life, but that's my own protective instincts kicking in for women in patriarchal places. It's entirely possible she "deserves" little of what Jesus is offering her.

Mercy—unmerited, inadvisably offered, and brimming with foolish hope—is the making of a Christ-follower. *(continued)*

It's not that I think practicing mercy is particularly easy.

**I doubt Jesus would talk so much about forgiveness and mercy if it were easy—God tends to repeat what we struggle to listen to. No, mercy is brutal.**

Mercy is what we ask for when we have messed up so mightily in our relationships, our marriages, our parenting, our friendships, that we face either the death of that relationship or the death of who we thought we were. Perhaps this is the kind of death this woman had experienced in her home, and the anger of the crowd was merely reflective of how hurt they were to see a home torn apart. Maybe she had been dealt a death-dealing marriage and was looking for escape. How dare she, then, receive. . . mercy?

**And yet, mercy makes no sense. It is not logical, or equally beneficial. Mercy does not make us money or make us look good. But mercy is what makes us God's own.**

The receiving and extending of mercy in the most awful and improbable of places is what makes me know that God is still at work in this world. **Mercy is a practice of hoping and knowing that there is more than the thing that hurts us—more than the thing that haunts us.**

This, too, is how mercy is part of God's justice, for God's justice is God's joy. God's justice does not align with our human metrics of justice and punishment. God's justice is the delight God feels at the lost sheep coming home, the coin being found. God's goodness is not retributive. God's goodness is rooted in goodness propagating in the face of death.

Which is, perhaps, why Jesus tells her: *Go. Sin no more. And live.*

## Sanctified Art Guiding Q's

1. Scholars note that this story seems to be a later addition to the Gospels, is likely dated around 400 C.E., and that some of its language seems more consistent with the Gospel of Luke instead of John. In *The Moral Teachings of Jesus*, David P. Gushee states, "The church has simply loved this story too much to keep it out of our collective memory of Jesus."

  - What are the particular elements of this story that make it so powerful for Christians?
  - Why do you think the church keeps telling this story?
  - What can we continue to learn from it?
2. There's no mention of the husband, and no details of the woman's alleged transgression are provided.

  - Could she have been raped or threatened? Is the focus of this story even about adultery, or should our focus be elsewhere?
  - Is Jesus the one being questioned and put on trial?
3. Block out and choreograph all of the movement occurring in this story (from what is written and what you imagine).

  - When paying close attention to the proximity between Jesus and the woman, what new perspective do you gain?
4. In *Jesus for Everyone*, Amy-Jill Levine points out that the Greek word used for "test" (peirazó) in John 8:6 is the same word used in the Lord's prayer ("Lead us not into temptation") and when Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness. She writes: "The story itself is not technically about forgiveness. It is about legal procedure. . . . Were Jesus to say 'go ahead and stone her,' they could accuse him of violating Torah because of the lack of witnesses and so an incomplete legal process. They could accuse him of lacking mercy. A verdict of death could also prompt the charge of sedition since, according to John 18:31, Rome had forbidden locals the right of capital punishment."

  - What result are the scribes and Pharisees hoping for by testing Jesus in this way?
5. What do you think Jesus is writing in the sand and why is this detail emphasized?<sup>27</sup>

  - Is he writing the sins of the religious leaders?
  - A secret message to the woman? The Ten Commandments?
  - Is he simply doodling nervously in the face of the mounting questions, an avoidance tactic to buy time?
6. In Matthew 23, Jesus is preaching to the crowds and disciples, denouncing the hypocrisy of many religious leaders. He declares that justice, mercy, and faith are the weightier precepts of the law.

  - How do you see justice, mercy, and faithfulness prioritized in your civil laws and religious policies?
  - In what ways are these values neglected?

**Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]:**

1. *Take some time to engage in Art as a spiritual discipline...*



## Epilogue

by T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by John 8:2-11

14"x18" Acrylic on canvas

I often wonder about the backstory of the woman from John 8:2-11. What were her circumstances? How did they “catch” her in the act of adultery? *In flagrante delicto?*<sup>18</sup> Was it less graphic than that? Was she allowed to explain herself? Did she protest? If she was about to be stoned, what happened to the person with whom she was accused? Was this a loving relationship? Was it even consensual?

Whatever her story, the Pharisees bring her to Jesus expecting him to uphold the law’s punitive prescription. Jesus knows it’s a trap. If he concurs with the law, he initiates and must bear witness to an act of extreme brutality that would traumatize anyone who had to watch. If he counters the law,

he’s a heretic and should probably be stoned himself. But he outsmarts them and turns their self-righteousness and rage back onto them.

In what should have been the end of her life’s story, this woman now finds herself standing. Whole. Alive. Freed to a new future. And through it all, Jesus is just drawing on the ground—like you do!

I wanted to show this woman standing in her wholeness, right after the crowds have dispersed and right before Jesus rises to meet her as an equal. She’s backlit in a way that suggests the sun has set, indicating the end of a saga. What will she do at the end of a nightmare with a new life ahead of her? What decisions do we face at the dawn of a second chance? —Rev. T. Denise Anderson

## Look

*Contemplate the woman in the image. What do you imagine is her backstory? What do you dream for her future?*

<sup>18</sup> This is a Latin phrase often used in legal contexts that can be translated to: “in the very act of committing an offense.”



## There Is Good

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Matthew 23:23

18"x18" Hand-dyed and collaged newspaper with paper lace overlay

In this series of scriptures, gathered crowds drew my attention.<sup>19</sup> Jesus always drew a crowd, but so did the voices of hate in his time. In our current historic moment, this dichotomy of crowds for justice and crowds for injustice confounds me. Are all crowds worthy of joining? In the background of this piece, I dyed and collaged together torn newspaper, representing the fabric of the world, to portray the cacophony of crowds gathering. What is drawing them in? Is everything that compels us to gather right and good? No.

The clarity comes in this scripture: "For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23). Most especially, in the context of Jesus denouncing the scribes and Pharisees, the crucial point is that gathering to enact justice *is* good and gathering to enact injustice *is not*.

The crowd depicted in this artwork is inspired by the 100,000 who gathered strong in Budapest, Hungary, in June, 2025. The Hungarian parliament had outlawed Pride as part of a larger systemic effort to take away the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community in Hungary, and a "wider effort to curb democratic freedoms ahead of a hotly contested national election next year."<sup>20</sup>

In the four corners of the artwork, symbols of justice, mercy, and faithfulness echo the clarity of Jesus. Gathering for justice is the work of the gospel. —Hannah Garrity

## Look

*If you could place yourself in this image, where would you be and why?*

<sup>19</sup> In Matthew 23, Jesus is preaching to the crowds and disciples, denouncing the hypocrisy of many religious leaders.

<sup>20</sup> Rutai, Lili. "Tens of thousands defy Hungary's ban on Pride in protest against Orbán." The Guardian. June 28, 2025. [theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/28/tens-of-thousands-defy-hungarys-ban-on-pride-in-protest-against-orban](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/28/tens-of-thousands-defy-hungarys-ban-on-pride-in-protest-against-orban).

## Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:



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

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<i>continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness</i>				<i>those in Community Living &amp; Homecare</i>
Aidan Uyeunten	Faith Tanaka	Kay Saxton	Patty Kabayashi	Chic Miyake
Rev. Alan Mark	Florence Nakakura	Kian Tehrani	Priscilla Kandel	Doris Kato
Alice Kajiya	Frank Sato	Kiki Hashimoto	Rachel Delgado	Emma Horiuchi
Alvena & Tom Fukuhara	Rev. Gary Williams	Rev. Kim Montenegro	Raquel M.Martinez	Faith Tanaka
Amy Higa	Geri Shiraki	Kelsey DeGracia	Rose Ellison	Rev. Harry Fujimoto
Anthony Anderson, Sr.	Glenn & Millie	Kenny Medeiros	Ron Hamaguchi	Irene & Tak Ryano
Apolosi Lokotui	Shimizu	Kyle Ichikawa	Rick Katsuki	Jane Kiyohara
Austin Maeda	Grace Tochihara	Larry Takumi	Ruth Hirata	Marion Antaku
Barbara Tamura	Grant Hanada	Layne Nakasone	Ruth Taira	Mary Jung
Betty Kobata	Harriet Tateyama	Linda Jung	Sandra Minjarez-	Nobie Shiakari
Bill Morris	Haru Yasunaga	Liz Harner	Grange	Ruth Hirata
Brian Okumura	Harry Manaka,	Lucas Yniguez	Stan Miyasato	Sets Asano
Cami Bruns	Sansei Rocker	Marisa Senzaki	Steph Matsunaga	Sue Hasegawa
Chic Miyake	Hisako Shohara	Marion Antaku	Sue Hamada	Jennie Shitakubo
Christine Keim	Ingrid Peterson	Maddie Sakurai-Lopez	Sue Hasegawa	Fred Oshiro
Claretta Foster	Irene Munesato	Mae Nakakihara	Susan DeGracia	Audrey Goto
Dan Segawa	Jack Honda	Mary Jung	Susan Mizuki	<i>for our Worldwide Community</i>
Danny Tokudomi	Jayne Watanabe	Mary & Bob Keily	Susan Slade	<i>for the Leadership of our Country and our Churches</i>
Dan Yamashita	Jehiel Vinluan	(siblings)	Takai Finau	<i>for the immigrants: migrants, refugees, asylees</i>
Deron Tokishi	Jennie Shitakubo	Mary Marchand	Theresa Apicella	<i>for our siblings in Christ who struggle and in need of God's care</i>
Diane & Destiny	Jerry Osaka	Mary Tamura	Tina Arguello	<i>for those who live in through wars, unrest, and violence</i>
Ueda-Banda	Joanne Sato	Maxine Butcher	Tommy Sakaguchi	<i>for those suffering and rebuilding after national disasters and man-made catastrophes</i>
Dr. DaAnn Tsuneko	Joelle Peelgreen	Rev. Mike Hiranuma	Tseyli Mantoath	
Kaneko	Jordan Sasaki	Mitchell Okumura	V'hraniku & Shaun Haynes	
Douglas Higa	Joye Barker	Miyoko Ahn	Victoria DelaTorre	
Elaine Yoshida	Juliet Koyanagi	Mutsuko Nishi	Walker Wilkerson	
Eleanor Nagai	Kaitlyn Sabedra	Nancy Matsushima	Wayne Shimizu	
Emi Hino	Karlynn Fernandez	Noah Miyagawa-Sue	Whitney Nakayama	
Ernie Santiago		Oscar Phillip Bland Jr.	Winnie Osaki	
		Pam Fink	Yukio Inouye	

*for All Our Saints*  
 Rebecca Hong & James Yeung and family on the passing of Rebecca's father, Rev. Kenneth Hong (3/18/26).  
 Lynne, Gilbert, and Erica Vinluan and family on the passing of Lynne's mother, Corinne Higa, (2/14/26).  
 Stephanie & Darrel Inouye and family on the passing of Darrel's mother, Lorraine Inouye, (2/14/26).  
 Alice & Darrell Mark, on the passing of Nelson's sister, MalPina Chan (2/14/26).  
 Trish Ulrickson and family on the passing of Rev. Mark Ulrickson (2/25/26).  
 Taho'a Atu and family on the passing of Pastor Sione Salesi John Atu (2/8/26).

UPDATED 3.20.2026

## Celebrations:

- ALTAR FLOWERS: Sasaki's for Jordan's bday, Kubo's for Connor's bday
- March Birthdays, Anniversaries, Milestones
  - Momo Wada turned 97yo on 3/24

## For healing and recovery

- |  |  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rev. Gary Bernard Williams</li> <li>● Jeanette Davis (Rhonda Benware's mother)</li> <li>● DAVE DELGADO'S MOTHER RACHEL AND TWO AUNTS</li> <li>● Andie Montoya's mother</li> <li>● Aidan Uyeunten</li> <li>● Chic Miyake</li> <li>● Pam Fink (recovery)</li> <li>● Diane Ueda-Banda</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Victoria DelaTorre</li> <li>● Alvena Fukuhara &amp; Tom</li> <li>● Harry &amp; Ruth Takaki</li> <li>● Mae Nakakihara</li> <li>● Mary Tamura</li> <li>● Jennie Shitakubo</li> <li>● Mitchell Okumura</li> <li>● Douglas Higa (Lynne Vinluan's dad)</li> <li>● Jehiel Vinluan</li> <li>● Dan Yamashita</li> </ul> |
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- Kenny Medeiros
- Apolosi Lokotui
- Susan Cordova (diagnosed with 3 types of cancer)
- Mary & Bob Kiely (siblings of Ann Kiely)
- Audrey Goto recovery
- Alice Kajiya
- Larry Takumi
- Harriet Tateyama
- Tseyli Mantooth
- Kim Foster & Claretta Foster: V'rhaniku Haynes: high risk pregnancy, 5 months, baby girl
- Deborah Benjamin
- Walker Wilkerson
- Kiki Hashimoto (Sue Kunisaki -friend)
- Rev's friends: Stan Miyasato, Mari'a Cleverly, (Norma, Ashley)
- Susan Slade's friend, Sherrie-finished tx
- Raquel Martinez (Julie's goddaughter)
- Frank Sato
- Mrs. Davis (friend of Kim Foster)
- Rev. Alan Mark
- The Shimizus
- Winnie Osaki
- Nancy Matsushima
- Mary Tamura
- Ruth Hirata
- Faith Tanaka
- Irene & Tak Ryono
- Nobie Shiokari
  - ...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

### **Traveling Mercies**

### **World Concerns:**

- All who struggle, suffer, experience pain and grief...
- US government and leadership (all of them); restoration of benefits, medical, food stamps, social security...
- War-torn countries, THE MIDDLE EAST, PALESTINE, SYRIA, IRAN, UKRAINE, SUDAN, MEXICO, VENEZUELA around the world...Natural disasters around the world...
- Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees losing rights and protections...
- Health Care system
- The homeless and impoverished
- Leadership (including clergy)
- THE SEVERE RAIN STORMS & FLOODING IN HAWAII
- Tom Hoang - deported
- All of God's children
- Proactive to support/share resources within in our Districts & Conference (protecting and supporting the vulnerable)

### **Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord**

- Rebecca Hong & James Yeung and family on the passing of Rebecca's father, Rev. Kenneth Hong (3/18/26).

## **And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing**

As you leave this place,  
when you meet anger, speak with love.  
When you meet fear, speak with hope.  
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.  
But no matter what, speak this good news.  
For the good news of the gospel is  
love and justice for all.  
It is joy that surprises,  
and nonviolence that transforms.  
The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,  
so go forth speaking.  
For if you won't, then who will?  
Thanks be to God  
for this good, good news.

### **Further reading & research**

**Read** "Letter From Birmingham Jail," by Martin Luther King, Jr. August 1963.  
[csuchico.edu/iege/\\_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf](http://csuchico.edu/iege/_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf)

*(Note: This week's theme presents the opportunity to review Martin Luther King, Jr.'s letter from Birmingham Jail. In part of the letter, he offers a lengthy explanation of the difference between just and unjust laws. He writes: "One may well ask, 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just laws, and there are unjust laws. . . Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. . . . We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal.'")*

**Read** "The Woman Who Was Not Collateral Damage," by Sarah Bessey. Sarah Bessey's Field Notes. Published on Substack. November 5, 2025.

[sarahbessey.substack.com/p/unexpected-jesus-part8](http://sarahbessey.substack.com/p/unexpected-jesus-part8)

*(Note: In this reflection, Sarah Bessey provides a detailed account of all the unexpected twists and turns within this story. She ultimately concludes that the woman "isn't collateral damage. Not in God's eyes." She continues: "There is never a worthwhile trade of suffering for 'the greater good' in the Kingdom of God. Every life has value, including hers. In the midst of all their games and entrapment plots and dangerous plans, Jesus never forgot that she was a real person, deserving care.")*

**Read** "The South Africa Kairos Document 1985." Kairos Southern Africa. September 25, 1985.  
[kairossouthernafrica.wordpress.com/2011/05/08/the-south-africa-kairos-document-1985/](http://kairossouthernafrica.wordpress.com/2011/05/08/the-south-africa-kairos-document-1985/)

*(Note: The Kairos Document, which was written in 1985 by South African church leaders, theologians, and Christian activists to resist apartheid, critiques Christian churches who accepted apartheid as a way to maintain "law and order." The writers of the treatise declare: "The State makes use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo which it depicts as 'normal.' But this law is the unjust and discriminatory laws of apartheid and this order is the organized and institutionalized disorder of oppression. Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin.")*