

May–August 2025

A photograph of three women laughing joyfully outdoors. They are wearing colorful jackets (blue, teal, and purple) and are positioned in front of a body of water and a rocky shoreline. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark purple band containing the title text.

Day by Day with God

Rooting women's lives in the Bible

FEATURING JEN BAKER, CHINE MCDONALD AND AMY BOUCHER PYE

May–Aug 2025

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Rooting women's lives in the Bible



Ministries



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Day by Day with God

Edited by Jackie Harris

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Writers in this issue

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Welcome



Having had a lot of decisions to make recently – and feeling this is not one of my strong points – I was particularly interested to read Lyndall Bywater’s study on ‘How to make decisions’. I found a lot of what she said really helpful and it made me think more broadly about how I read the Bible.

I confess there are times when it feels like a chore, when I sit with a passage and think, ‘This isn’t doing anything for me!’ That’s quite wrong, of course. First, it’s more likely that it’s touching a nerve, perhaps drawing me to think about something I don’t want to consider. Second, it’s changing me whether I am aware of it or not. Day by day, bit by bit, if I open my Bible with an open heart and mind, rather than an agenda, God’s word will inform my attitudes and behaviour and teach me how to live according to God’s ways. I find that really encouraging, and I’m learning that when reading the Bible feels hard, it’s time to dig a little deeper.

I also find it helpful to have someone else’s insights, which is where Bible reading notes like these come into their own. I can learn from others who have done their own reading and reflecting and are sharing what they have learned and how God has worked in their lives or the lives of people they know.

I’m very blessed to work with a wonderful team of writers who put a lot of care and prayer into the studies they write. We represent a diverse group of women from different backgrounds and with different ages and experiences, but we’re united in our love for the scriptures and desire to learn from them and know them better.

As Lyndall reminds us in her Bible study, we probably won’t find a verse that directly answers our dilemma or reflects our particular situation, but what we will find are verses that help us to see more clearly the God who loves us and wants to come alongside us whatever we are facing.

May these notes inspire you in your Bible reading, enable you to see God more clearly and draw you into his company.

Jackie

Jackie Harris, Editor

Making all things new: God's justice



Hannah Fytche writes...

One of my favourite books is C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It's a story of a cold winter and a long-awaited spring. The inhabitants of Narnia wait and work for a new day when the dominion of the White Witch is overthrown and Aslan sets all things right and makes all things new.

This hope is captured in words with which the Narnians continually reassure each other – words of wrongs being made right and spring coming forth from winter when Aslan arrives. You can see C.S. Lewis drawing on the Christian tradition in the words of hope he places in the Narnian voices. Aslan is the Christ-figure whose coming – and eventual death and resurrection – brings healing to the world. In his presence, sorrow melts. By his power, injustice and oppression are broken. Through his life, spring arrives.

This kind of justice, the righting of wrongs and the restoration of all things, is what we will explore through the next two weeks. We'll start with Jesus' proclamation of how he will bring God's promised renewal. We'll consider how people react to this announcement, recognising that Jesus' justice potentially disrupts old ways of life in order to bring new restoration. Stories of Jesus' teaching and enacting justice through his life, death and resurrection will help us to explore this tension between disruption and restoration in the pursuit of justice.

During the second week, we'll turn to three songs of justice, sung by Mary, Hannah, and Miriam and Moses. These songs are examples of people's responses to God's justice enacted in particular circumstances, and they will inspire us to think about how we seek and respond to God's justice in our own lives. Our final three days will prompt us to consider how we can put all we've discovered into practice.

With this in mind, let's begin with a prayer.

Christ Jesus, you make all things new. Open my eyes and heart to your radical justice over the next two weeks, and lead me to join with you in your work of transforming the world through your death and resurrection. May you show me where in my own life I can partner with you to contribute to a more just world. Amen.

Jesus proclaims justice

**‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’
(vv. 18–19, NIV)**

As Luke’s gospel tells the story, Jesus emerges from 40 days of wilderness trials and, in the power of the Spirit, returns to his hometown. In the synagogue, he announces to those gathered that he is the one anointed by God’s Spirit, the one of whom scripture speaks. He fulfils the prophecy that he reads from Isaiah.

Isaiah’s words prophesy justice, good news for the poor, freedom for prisoners, sight for those who are blind, an end to oppression, the Lord’s favour: these are all glimmers of a world made right. Isaiah imagines a world made new, and Jesus says he’s here to make that vision a reality.

I would have loved to have been there when Jesus claimed these words for himself. In my imagination everything quietens and stills as Jesus looks up from the scroll from which he’s reading. The congregation hold their breath. Even the air seems to hold its breath – the atmosphere is electric, expectant, as Jesus speaks those words that seem to say ‘Here I am! A world made whole and right is coming through me; I am making all things new. Freedom and healing are on their way.’

It’s as if the whole world has been waiting – aching! – to hear this beautiful proclamation of restoration.

I suspect we all ache for such promises to be made true, repairing all that’s hurt or broken. We don’t have to search far to find injustice: our world is full of it. Listen to the news and you’ll find dozens of headlines which proclaim the world’s heartbreak. I imagine you may have experienced different forms of injustice, too. Feel the ache of it. Then imagine yourself hearing Jesus say he’s here to bring relief from the pain. Here he is, proclaiming God’s justice. Restoration is on its way.

Consider how God’s ‘justice’ that Jesus brings in vv. 18–19 is described. Which one resonates most? What other words might you use to describe ‘justice’?

A disruptive justice

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. (vv. 28–30, NIV)

After Jesus' proclamation of God's justice, a dispute breaks out. His listeners doubt the veracity of Jesus' claim: surely *Jesus*, Joseph's son, can't be the one promised by God to bring this to life!

Jesus responds with stories in which those who are not God's people receive God's blessing through Elijah, while God's people reject him. He says a prophet is rarely received as such by their own people, but the truth of their prophetic claims is not undermined. Though Jesus' listeners doubt him, what he says is true.

Angered further, Jesus' listeners drive him out of town. I wonder what was so offensive about Jesus' claims. Was it something to do with what will be required to bring God's justice to life?

Jesus speaks of justice for those who are on the margins of society: the poor, the prisoners, the oppressed and those from outside of the community of God's people. This is disruptive. To bring restoration to marginalised people requires an upending of societal norms. For the powerful, it means recognising complicity in the act of marginalising others; and for all of us, it requires inclusion of those who hadn't before been included.

As an example, we could think about our supply chains – the global systems that bring food to our plates and clothes to our bodies. Much within these systems is unjust. To bring restoration to those harmed by them would require a disruption of the ways in which we have come to live. It would require an overhaul of economic and social patterns, and while we can all agree this is just, it is also disruptive.

While his listeners are engrossed in their arguments, Jesus goes on his way, journeying to restore all things through his life, death and resurrection.

God's justice calls for restoration of the marginalised and othered. Who are those people in our world today? How can we find healing together (especially when this disrupts our own patterns of living)?

HANNAH FYTCHE

The parable of the good Samaritan

He answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ (v. 27, NIV)

‘Who is my neighbour?’, the lawyer asks. Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan to reimagine what it means to ‘love your neighbour’. Today, being a Samaritan stands for being compassionate and caring for those who are in need. We are put in the Samaritan’s shoes and told to emulate his actions. *We* are the ones who help *others*, even if they are our enemy or different than us. We are not the ones in need.

Might there be another perspective from which we could view this parable? Parables have multiple meanings: instead of imagining ourselves as the Samaritan, we could imagine ourselves as the man left for dead.

Then we might ask, ‘Who will help me?’ Contrary to expectation, the Levite and priest, afraid of stopping on this dangerous road, don’t help.

The Samaritan, the enemy, helps. To Jesus’ Jewish audience this would’ve been shocking. It perhaps even evoked a response of ‘I’d rather be left for dead than be helped by a *Samaritan*.’ The enmity between the people groups was this visceral. The neighbour in Jesus’ parable cannot be a Samaritan! (Read more about this in Amy-Jill Levine’s *Short Stories by Jesus*.)

Yet if this meaning of ‘neighbour’ is refused, then the man in the parable is left for dead. To refuse the Samaritan as a neighbour is to refuse the help he offers. This is where we find our reflection on justice. God’s justice doesn’t always look like *us* helping *others*, but also *us* recognising that we *are* the others, needing to receive help from those we might view as the enemy. Justice comes through our humility to see God’s new life at work for us through those we might not expect – even if that totally disrupts our previous perspectives.

Who are ‘enemies’ in your life – or the ones from whom you wouldn’t normally accept help? How might you learn to see them anew as your neighbour, one through whom new life and hope can come into your life?

Praying for God's justice

'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' (vv. 2-4, NIV)

'Pray the Lord's Prayer twice a day, and let it reveal to you who God is with you and in this world.' This is a paraphrase of some advice a friend once gave to someone curious about the Christian faith. Pray the words Jesus taught twice a day and let them inform your imagination of what God is like and how God acts in the world. Let them show you a vision of what God's goodness and justice can look like in our lives.

God's justice looks like needs met: daily bread in the hands of each hungry person. It looks like forgiveness: relationships repaired even when they've been broken. It looks like a way through temptation: a way we can walk that leads to life rather than destruction.

God's justice looks like the kingdom being made present among us in all these ways.

Jesus teaches us to pray for such restorative justice – pray his words twice a day; pray them more! May they inform your imagination of God bringing life that you can join in with making a reality.

May you be reassured, too, that it will become a reality, even against the odds of this unjust world. After teaching his disciples this prayer, Jesus continues his teaching, saying: 'Ask and it will be given to you.' God is even more loving than the most loving parent: through prayer, God offers abundant gifts to his children.

When we pray with this vision of a world brought to life by God's love, our imaginations become shaped by it. We begin to see the world as God sees it – and when we see with this vision, we come to live in such a way that makes that vision more of a reality. Father, your kingdom come.

How might you allow this prayer to inform your imagination of the just world God is bringing? Which words capture your imagination, and how might they reveal where God is bringing restoration in your life and the lives of others?

HANNAH FYTCHE

Jesus enacts justice: on the sabbath

When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, ‘Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.’ Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. (v. 12, NIV)

Jesus lives and breathes God’s justice. Today’s reading, as well as those for the next few days, are gospel stories which illuminate how Jesus brings healing through his life, death and resurrection.

In today’s story, Jesus pauses his teaching in a synagogue as he sees a woman ‘crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up’ (v. 11). This woman lives with chronic illness (‘spirits’ are often best understood in the New Testament as being to do with conditions which we know today are caused by mental or physical illness, injury or sickness). Her chronic illness has her bent over in pain. Her life will have been severely limited. Jesus pauses in his teaching to heal her.

This is a very personal instance of restoration. It shows us that, at its heart, God’s justice is about compassion for people. God cares for each one of us, for the particular burdens we bear and the specific scars we carry. Jesus makes all people, each one of us, new.

As well as revealing the deeply personal nature of God’s justice, this is also a story (once again) of the disruptive nature of justice. Jesus heals this woman on the sabbath – the day on which no work should be done. This angers the synagogue leader, and Jesus responds by helping his listeners to reimagine the ways in which God works. Why shouldn’t the woman be set free on the sabbath?

Jesus disrupts expectations of how God brings restoration. He brings new life to old patterns of living – old ways of following God. He doesn’t discard these old ways, but instead reimagines them. Disruptive and personal: God’s justice is both wonderfully restorative and potentially uncomfortable. Jesus is doing a new thing. May we perceive it.

Jesus, may compassion disrupt my expectations of your justice. As I seek to live justly, may I prioritise those you love rather than my own preconceptions about how to love them. Amen.

Jesus enacts justice: for the outcasts

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.
(vv. 43-44, NIV)

Today's story is another in which we see Jesus enacting personal justice. A woman has been bleeding for twelve years. She's risking much by coming to Jesus because according to her culture's customs, her ailment means that she shouldn't be seen, heard or touched.

This woman is marginalised by the expectations of her world. Yet she does an extraordinary thing and reaches for healing from the hem of Jesus' cloak – sneaking a touch which, by her faith, heals her. Jesus responds to this brave act with welcome. The woman is seen, known and loved. She is moved from the margins to the centre of Jesus' attention.

When I think about injustice, the word 'marginalised' springs to mind. Those whom injustice deeply affects are often those discriminated against or pushed to the edges of communities by those at the powerful centre. We see this dynamic at work in many contexts. Systemic racism and sexism marginalise people on the basis of race and gender, respectively. A class system marginalises people on the basis of wealth and sometimes geography. Many of us are victims of such injustices as these. This is painful – and I pray that when experiencing such pain we find in Christ someone who sees, knows and loves us.

Yet many of us are also complicit in such injustices, caught up in the expectations of our cultures. The work of justice is to repent of this complicity and to rise from the place of repentance with humility that helps us to be like Christ in seeing and knowing each person as loved and worthy. In Christ, there is always enough space at the centre: no one need be marginalised. A world restored is one in which we all find seats at the feast, welcomed there by Christ and each other.

Jesus, you see and know me. Show me where I have not lived up to your compassion by marginalising others. Create in my communities relationships in which I am seen and known and in which I see and know others. Amen.

HANNAH FYTCHE

Justice through humility

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. (vv. 3-4, NIV)

We have been reading about Jesus proclaiming, teaching and enacting the restorative justice that he'll bring through his life, death and resurrection, and we've considered how this kind of justice can disrupt and upset our expectations, perspectives and social systems.

This combination of restoration and disruption is seen again in this intimate story, in which Jesus, just before he died, kneels to wash his friends' feet. Aware of the power with which God anoints him, Jesus upends expectations of how God's anointed should bring justice. People expected God to send a saviour who was mighty in power – not one who knelt with a towel around his waist. Yet Christ brings new life through becoming a servant.

Simon Peter voices his confusion, his ideas about Jesus disrupted: 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' *Surely not*. Jesus points towards his death and resurrection as he replies: 'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand' (vv. 6-7).

After Jesus' resurrection his friends will understand that Jesus' justice does not come through a mighty battle, but through Jesus humbling himself to the death of the cross. Restoration comes by having our feet washed by Christ – by finding ourselves made whole and holy through Jesus' death and brought to life through his resurrection.

This, I think, is the most astonishing disruption of all. Christ's death disrupts every hierarchy of power; no one was expecting God's salvation of the world to come through a crucifixion. Yet as Christ's body is broken so too is every system of oppression and injustice which holds people captive rather than liberates them. As Christ's body is raised, death in all its guises is overcome. Amen and amen.

Dwell with the image of Christ kneeling to wash our feet, defeating injustice in our lives and our world through humility and service. Imagine yourself into the scene. What do you say to Jesus? What does he say to you?