

Thought for the Day: 12–18 April 2021

by Claire Goodman

Thinking about our relationship with God and with each other

Monday 12 April

If you have been around church for a while, faith has been explained, shared. It is familiar and the rhythms are comforting. A while back, I read Job, no one had told me the story I didn't know how it ended. It seemed full of good advice to someone suffering, advice I too might wrongly offer, then boom, God's view. We have a relationship with the Creator, who is literally awesome and yet, and yet knows us in every detail.



"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone - while the morning stars sang together, and all the angels shouted for joy?"

(Job 38. 4-7 NIV)

Tuesday 13 April

The quality of a relationship is often how much you trust that person. You may like them, enjoy their company, but if you must rely on them that brings a whole new dynamic to the relationship. Accepting that I do not know where my relationship with God could lead is often the first step.

*"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them."*

(Isaiah 42. 16 NIV)

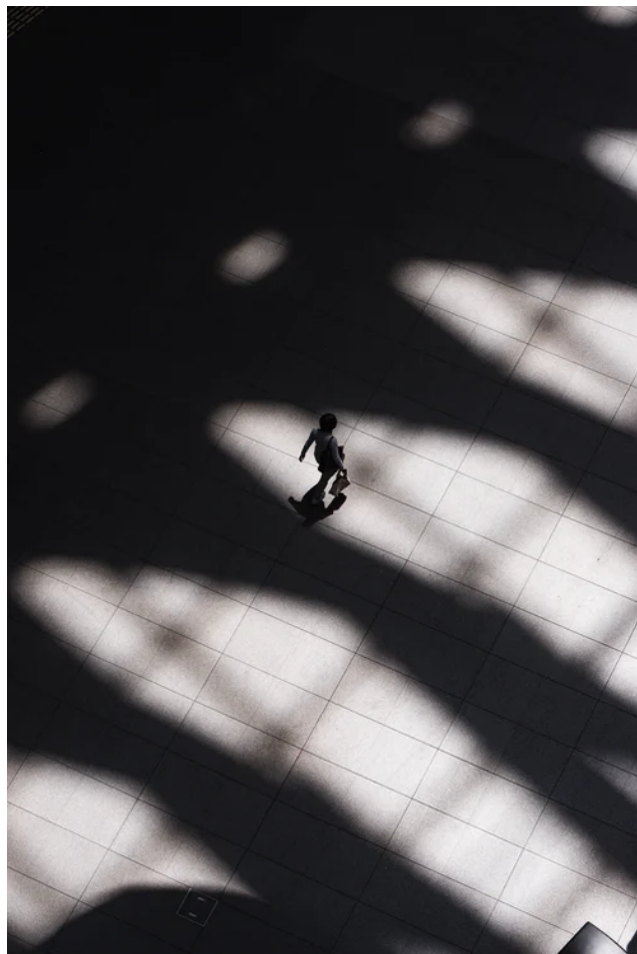


Wednesday 14 April

I was reading a psalm, cannot remember which one. It was full of imagery, as many are, of God as our shield, our strong tower, a hiding place. Strong images of safety when under attack. My reaction was a passing thought of *"I wish we didn't need this; I wish that life did not require divine protection"*. Then, a few days later came news that upended every certainty, all that was lovely and brought darkness and yes, fear. In that moment the psalm was a reminder we are not exempt and a confirmation that this is how it is, and God is with us and for us.

"He who dwells in the shelter of the most high, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

(Psalm 91. 1-2 NIV)



Thursday 15 April

Some people know that God loves them, from an early age - it is an inexplicable conviction. Others like C.S. Lewis resist: *"I gave in, and admitted that God was God ... perhaps that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."* The rest of us are perhaps somewhere in between. The variety of stories and testimonies about coming to Jesus, enrich and enliven how we encounter God and each other.

"Let us not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

(Hebrews 10. 25 NIV)



Friday 16 April

If you ask anyone in our homegroup who I often quote, they might roll their eyes and say Eugene Petersen. He was a pastor for over twenty years, immersed himself in poetry and novels, taught spiritual theology and paraphrased the bible as The Message. He died in 2018. We often read or talk about how to be close to God, to be in relationship, this is his practical response from an interview about getting to know Jesus.

RICK: *Besides reading and studying Scripture, are there other things that you personally have done in your life to move toward greater intimacy with Jesus?*

EUGENE: *I think, having relationships with people you don't particularly like. Caring for people, and your own family - your spouse. I don't think there are any secrets to this. I really don't.*



Saturday 17 April

Our grand-daughter Imogen has leukaemia. We are on the side-lines, lamenting the harsh side effects of chemotherapy and rejoicing in the good days. So many are with us, praying, swearing sometimes at the random cruelty of it all, asking for her and her family to know the presence and peace of God. Sometimes, relationships require us to carry and be carried.

"Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on." (Mark 2. 2-4 NIV)



Sunday 18 April

I like the comedy of the story of Peter being miraculously released from prison (Acts 12). The members of the early church were praying for him. Peter arrived at the house and knocked on the door, Rhoda was so excited she left him waiting outside, running to tell the others, who needed persuading (and Peter's insistent knocking) that he really was there.

They had reason not to believe because James had been killed.

Our relationship with Jesus and with each other deepens when we pray together, sharing in each other's suffering and celebrations. Thankful for those who help us to persevere.

"There's more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling short-changed. Quite the contrary - we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!"

(Romans 5. 3-5 The Message)

