



Lent Devotional

Open

Reflections, prayers and
poems for Lent



tearfund

Hello, and welcome to Open.

‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.’ (Revelation 3:20)

I adore Lent. It is a time of beautiful re-focusing.

A time to pay closer attention to the life that lives beyond busyness.

To tune in to the melodies of spirit and invest in a more heaven-hued treasure.

To create sacred rhythms that move our feet down paths of goodness.

The pandemic has distorted time. The distinctions between days, weeks and months have blurred.

Such disruption can make us lose our spiritual bearings. But Lent is an opportunity to remedy that.

Lent is a sanctuary in time; a seven-week island in a stormy sea. It is a specific, intentional period in which we can reorientate ourselves.

It is a time to be drawn further in to the heart of God.

This Lent, let us be open to that gorgeous possibility.

Gideon Heugh
Editor

Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotations are NIV UK.



Week one:


Open to transformation

‘See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.’

Isaiah 43:19

Day 1: Believing in change

Wednesday 22 February
Ash Wednesday

 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Matthew 3:2 ESV

Is change possible? Can our circumstances change? Can we ourselves change? Can the world change?

The above call to action from John the Baptist is repeated by Jesus at the start of his ministry (Matthew 4:17). The word 'repent' is, in the original Greek, *metanoeó*. It literally means to change one's mind, purpose or inner self.

Jesus believed in change. He called us to it. 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Or, to paraphrase: 'Things don't have to be this way; Spirit is here – God is on the move.'

Despair says, 'things will always be this way'; faith is open to the possible.


This is why Tearfund believes practical support must go hand in hand with the spiritual. If a community believes it is stuck, then stuck it will be. But if a community begins to believe in change, then change will not be far behind.

Jesus, Saviour, Healer, Transformer – thank you that your kingdom is at hand. Keep us from despair; open our hearts to the possible. Help us to play our part in the transformation of this world. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 2: Renewing our minds

Thursday 23 February

 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'

Romans 12:2

What is the pattern of this world?

It might not be possible to know exactly what Paul meant by this, but looking at the world around us, we can discern some of the 'isms' that shape it:

- **Cynicism.** Believing that human nature is fundamentally selfish.
- **Consumerism.** Believing that happiness is found in acquiring more things.
- **Capitalism.** Believing that endless economic growth is possible, and should be relentlessly pursued.
- **Individualism.** Believing that we should all be self-reliant – responsible for our own lives alone.

This pattern of the world has led to great injustice, destruction and sorrow.


Let us renew our minds and believe the truth that all humans are made in God's image. Let us believe in enough, that less is more, that simple is beautiful. And let us believe in each-otherness, in connection, and in community.

Loving God, form our lives into a more beautiful pattern. Renew our minds so that they are shaped by faith, hope and love. And help us all to bring heaven here. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 3: Ways in the wilderness

Friday 24 February

 'I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'

Isaiah 43:19

We have all been through times of wilderness. Times of uncertainty, of challenge, of doubt. Times when it has felt as though there wasn't a way out.

In the Bible, the wilderness is never the end – but it can become a means to an end.

It is not only that God makes a way in the wilderness, but that the wilderness is the way.

It is in the wilderness that we learn, that we grow – that we let go of what might be holding us back and take hold of what might take us forward.


That is not to say that the wilderness should be celebrated. Pain and sorrow are real, and shouldn't be turned aside from or covered up. Yet, we can take heart from the fact that God is there in the wilderness with us – making ways, creating streams of life, preparing us for something new.

God of the wilderness, help us to hold on to hope in times of uncertainty, difficulty and pain. Thank you that the wilderness itself can become the way. Lead us, God, lead us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 4: A transformation prayer

Saturday 25 February

 'He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'

Philippians 1:6

Every Saturday we will focus purely on prayer. Take your time with this. Allow yourself space to tune in to how God might be leading you to respond.

Write down – on a piece of paper, in a notebook, in this booklet or on your phone – three situations where you want to see change take place. These might be situations where you have felt stuck for some time, or global circumstances where change seems impossible.

Once you have written them down, read through them, place your hand over them, then thank God that change is possible. Ask God what he is already doing in these situations, and how he might want you to participate. Be silent for a few seconds. Release the burden to God. Repeat this as many times as you like. You might want to do this together with a friend, family member, or group that you trust.

Lucie N'Guessan

Lucie is from Ivory Coast, and leads Tearfund's communications in West Africa

Day 5: Look, look!

Sunday 26 February

‘Weeping may stay for
the night, but rejoicing
comes in the morning.’

Psalms 30:5

Each Sunday we will share a poem with you. Treat this as a Sabbath day. Go slow; be still; be open to what the Holy Spirit might say.

Look, look!

*A few easy moments taken in the sun;
three small birds blessing me with their songs;
each with their charming particularity;
each showing (and I'd bet my life upon it)
that they are in possession of a soul;
each repeating (and I beg you to listen)
precisely the same refrain:*

Look, look, it is spring, it is spring!

Look, look! Life is rising from beneath the ground.

The green river is flowing, the green river is flowing!

It is ready to burst its banks.

Gideon Heugh

Poem is © Gideon Heugh, from 'Rumours of Light'



Week two:


Open to God

“Who can hide in secret places so that
I cannot see them?” declares the Lord.
“Do not I fill heaven and earth?”

Jeremiah 23:24

Day 6: Pay attention

Monday 27 February

 'Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?'

Psalm 139:7

God is omnipresent. *Always present*, at every moment.

We don't need to wait for God to 'show up'. What we need to do is open our awareness. Faith, in a way, is therefore merely the practice of paying attention.

That's easier said than done in the age of distraction, when we're encouraged to focus anywhere but the present moment. We can't be distant from God, but we can be distracted from God.

So here is a challenge for you this Lent: pay attention.

Pay attention to yourself. Your depths. Your aches. Your desires. Your tiredness. Your anger. God is in those things.

Pay attention to the world. It really is astonishing.
Pay attention to other people. They're all going through something.


Pay attention to hope. It's real. While the news tends to focus our attention only on what's going wrong in the world, there is plenty going right. God is not in a state of dismay; God is moving, working, feeding the great work of restoration.

Always-present God, help us to pay attention. To the world. To other people. To ourselves. And, ultimately, to you. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 7: The unexpected God

Tuesday 28 February

 'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...'

Ephesians 3:20

I don't often like the unexpected. In life, I much prefer an organised to-do list and honed daily rhythms.

But, some of my most profound experiences of God have been at the most unexpected times and places.

I have been most surprised by God's presence when I have let down the walls in my heart that divide life into neat, expected compartments. I used to search for God in the lofty and significant places, thinking that my everyday, ordinary life was unimportant. Yet, the reality of the gospel is that God inhabits our whole hearts, and our whole lives are transformed by his love.

Since I realised that my whole life was a living sacrifice to the one who made me, God has revealed himself in unexpectedly ordinary ways.

Is your whole heart open to God today? What a gift that he wants the whole thing.

Dear God, thank you that you inhabit our whole hearts, and the ordinary, everyday stuff of our lives. Thank you that you transcend all of the boxes that we try to keep you in, surprising us with your love and grace, time and again. May our transformed hearts lead to a transformed world. Amen.

Lauren Agnew

Lauren works in Tearfund's Northern Ireland Team

Lent Appeal

Find out more about how local churches are opening the door of opportunity for people like Edwige – and how you can make a difference.

Visit tearfund.org/lentbook or scan the QR code today.



📍 Edwige, 29, from Ivory Coast, has received life-changing business training from Tearfund's local church partner

Photo: Thiombiano Djoyadibi
Emmanuel Benjamin/Tearfund

Day 8: The Jesus difference

Wednesday 1 March

‘No one is like you, Lord; you are great, and your name is mighty in power.’

Jeremiah 10:6

It would have been easy for Edwige, from a town in central Ivory Coast, to give up. Her parents both died when she was five and she was brought up by her aunt. When she was a teenager, Edwige went to work as a maid in the city. But she was exploited and not paid, so she returned home.

Many of the men in the community work in illegal gold mines, while women are often drawn into prostitution. Edwige refused, selling cassava at the market for little money instead. At her lowest point, Edwige hadn't eaten for three days.

But, God was about to open a door. A couple from the local church came to visit; they told Edwige that Jesus loves her and invited her to church. There, she prayed and asked God to help change her life. Edwige became a Christian and soon joined the church's business training programme, supported by Tearfund.

Since childhood, Edwige dreamed of starting a restaurant. With the training she has received, Edwige now has a plan to start her business and pursue that dream.

Join with Edwige in this song of thanksgiving: *'You took me from chaos and made me sit at the table with kings. Jesus, you're Lord. Nobody can compare to you, Jesus.'* Amen!

Gbati Kossi Agbo

Gbati leads Tearfund's work in West Africa

Day 9: Cosmic love

Thursday 2 March

 'Your love, Lord, reaches
to the heavens...'

Psalm 36:5

In 2022, NASA switched on the James Webb telescope and pointed it at the cosmos. This telescope, which orbits 1 million miles above Earth's atmosphere, can capture glimpses of distant reaches of the universe in astonishing detail.

The images it has sent back so far are breathtaking. Galaxies and nebulae, and even planets from star systems that are millions of light-years away. They are images that inspire awe and wonder. Images that show just how big the universe is, and how small we are.

And yet, stacked up against love, a galaxy is nothing.

Love is cosmic in scale. It transcends space and time. The universe is big, but love is bigger still. And we, whose lives are little more than vapour (James 4:14, KJV), are capable of love. More than that, we are made in the image of the source of love itself: the living God, who is love.

We are tiny. Yet when we love, we are cosmic.

Thank you, God, for your love. Help us to be open to that love, as well as open to sharing that love with others. Amen.

Gideon Heugh



Day 10: Holy doubt

Friday 3 March

‘And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’

Philippians 4:7

I used to be terrified of doubt. I used to think that doubting meant I was a bad Christian. Surely true faith is always certain?

I have since learned that this is not a healthy way to live. Nor, I think, is it what God wants or expects from us.

There cannot be faith without doubt, because faith involves risk, and trust. There is a difference between having faith in something and being certain of it.

The call is not to flee from the uncertainty, but to seek God within it. I have been challenging myself with this when it comes to addressing poverty. Global hunger and poverty are massive, overwhelming challenges. It is easy to have doubts about whether we can overcome them.

Yet in these doubts, I trust. I feel the uncertainty, and I move forward anyway, knowing God is beside me.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you do not ask me to hide from my doubts. I bring my uncertainty and my questions before you today [spend a few moments thinking of areas in which you feel doubt], and I put my trust in you. Amen.

Chloe Au

Chloe lives in Kuala Lumpur and is Tearfund's Communications Lead in Asia

Day 11: A presence prayer

Saturday 4 March

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’

Isaiah 6:3

God of all,

As the dawn colours the sky, and the birds call forth the new day – Open my heart to your presence.

As I go about my daily routine; as I eat, drink, work and play – Open my heart to your presence.

As I walk among the beauty of your world; as I take in its wonders – Open my heart to your presence.

As the clouds of grief, sorrow and worry surround me – Open my heart to your presence.

As I face doubt, uncertainty and the shaking of my beliefs – Open my heart to your presence.

As the sun lowers, darkness falls, and I lay down my head to sleep – Open my heart to your presence.

Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 12:

I see you

Sunday 5 March

‘For I am the Lord your God
who takes hold of your
right hand and says to you,
Do not fear; I will help you.’

Isaiah 41:13

The Path

*I see you – there in the shattering you
looking for you; seeking your self
in the can't-cope of it;
the never-ending weary of it.
I see you – desperate for your soul
to be a more solid thing; to be found
amid the pantheon of the real.
I see you – wondering if God
is just the translucence of a dream.
I have been there in the lostness;
I have tangled with the shadows;
I will tell you – won't you know it? –
that something is reaching for your hand.*

Gideon Heugh

Poem is © Gideon Heugh, from ‘Rumours of Light’



Week three:

Open to each other

‘How good and pleasant it is when
God's people live together in unity!’

Psalms 133:1

Day 13: God is in the gathering

Monday 6 March

‘For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.’

Matthew 18:20

This Bible verse is about far more than just prayer or worship. Jesus is telling us something vital about the human condition:

We’re not meant to go it alone.

This is the opposite of the message of our age. We are told that the individual is absolute; that we should be self-reliant; that there’s power in independence. No wonder so many of us are miserable.

We are, quite literally, made for each other. God formed us for togetherness. It is in community, fellowship and interdependence that Spirit finds a home.

It’s not always easy. People are messy. Relationships are difficult. Yet, they are what adds life to being alive.

God is in the gathering.

Lord, help us to build community. In a world of individualism, help your church to show the beauty and power of the collective. Pour your blessing upon our relationships; we gather in your name. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 14: Breaking down barriers

Tuesday 7 March

‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’

Galatians 3:28

We might think that a refugee’s troubles end when they return home. But that’s rarely the case. Often, families can come back to pick up the pieces of their lives only to find that there aren’t many pieces left.

Aside from having to deal with the trauma of their experience, refugees – especially those from areas of extreme poverty – have to reckon with communities who may have moved on. Refugees can be away for many years, during which time their homes may have been reoccupied and their jobs taken.

A crucial part of Tearfund’s work is coming alongside communities to help them to welcome and reintegrate refugees. This is often done through local churches, who spread the message that there is no ‘us and them’ when it comes to returning refugees – there is only ‘all of us’.

We can, and must, apply this to our lives. To think in terms of ‘us and them’ is to violate God’s intentions. We are all made in God’s image. We are all part of this one world. We are one body, and we should treat each other as such.

Lord, thank you that we are one in Christ Jesus. Help us to live out this reality in our lives. We pledge to see all people as you see them – worthy, beloved, made in your image. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 15: The together difference

Wednesday 8 March

'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.'

Matthew 5:14

Tearfund's vision for church transformation is to help the church to understand its mandate to be an instrument of the Lord's hands in the countries where we work. My country is Ivory Coast.

Our work through local churches here is instrumental and very powerful. Because this is where we discover God's purpose for humankind. We have been created in the image of God. And God has provided us with the resources that we need to use wisely for the benefit of all people.

God's plan is for us to prosper. Poverty is not God's plan. God's plan is for our life to be better. And it is through working together as the church that we will achieve this.

We want to thank the church in the UK for the support that you are providing. We feel connected to you through Christ in how you support us. Thank you so much.

Lord, we pray for the church to continue to play its role in communities and be a beacon of light. For the church to stand as salt and light in communities, so that we can contribute to whole life transformation. Amen.

Richard Yao

Richard is Tearfund's Country Director in Ivory Coast

Lent Appeal

Find out more about our work in Ivory Coast and how you can help transform the lives of people living in poverty.

Visit tearfund.org/lentbook or scan the QR code today.



Local churches like this one in Zambokro, Ivory Coast, are leading their communities out of poverty


Photo: Thiombiano Dioyadibi
Emmanuel Benjamin/Tearfund



Day 16:

Repair

Thursday 9 March

 'First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.'

Matthew 5:24

We began this Lent devotional by looking at the word 'repent' – affirming the fact that change is possible.

In the Bible, repentance is often used in the context of a transgression. You have caused harm, so now you must make amends.

This is a beautiful and necessary thing. Especially in this day and age, where there seems to be so little accountability – where those in positions of power rarely seem to own up to their mistakes.

Repentance – change – is possible. And so is repair. It is possible, it is vital, it is godly.

Let each of us be leaders in reconciliation. Difficult though it may be, let us not be afraid to take that humbling first step. Acknowledge the hurt. Apologise. Forgive. Begin the work of repair.


Lord, thank you that there is no end to your grace. Help us to extend that same grace to others and to ourselves. Help us, God, to be a people of repair. In Jesus' name, amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 17:

The meaning of church

Friday 10 March

 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'

Acts 2:42

The global pandemic impacted individuals, communities and churches more than we ever could have imagined. The benefit of online services has been felt across the globe, with many unchurched individuals attending from their own homes. It gave a safe space for people to explore faith, while also allowing those less mobile to connect.

But if we believe the church is a physical community that gathers around the person and work of Jesus, should we crave proximity again? Church doesn't have to be complicated, but it does require community. This is why Tearfund works through local churches: being at the heart of communities, they can easily become centres for transformation.

Is now the time for us to strive for deep community again? What if we took the positives of new online expressions, but pursued fellowship again?

Church isn't a building. It isn't a Sunday service. It's a family sharing the highs and lows of life with Jesus together.

Lord, thank you that you love and model community. Thank you for how we could harness the online world for good during the pandemic. Help us to continue to pursue thriving fellowship. Amen.


Lois Franks

Lois is on the leadership team at Hope Church Rhondda, Wales

Day 18:

A prayer for the church

Saturday 11 March

 **'All the believers were together and had everything in common.'**
Acts 2:44

Read the following passage through two or three times, reflecting on what it means to be truly open to each other. Then, commit the prayer below to God.

'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.' (Acts 2:42-47)

'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching...'
God, open our minds to the teachings of others.

'...and to fellowship...'
God, open our hearts to the friendship of others.

'...to the breaking of bread...'
God, open our tables for the provision of others.

'...and to prayer...'
God, open our souls to your beautiful voice.


Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 19:

Within your heart

Sunday 12 March

 **'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.'**
Ephesians 2:10

'It is not yours to finish the task, but neither are you free to set it aside.' Rabbi Tarfon

Within your heart

It is true, the odds are stacked against us.
It is true, the weight of the world feels
as though it may break us.

Our days are numbered;
the clock is ticking;
and the goodness on which we wanted to depend
too often seems to go missing.

Do not be afraid –
to complete the repair of the world
is not why you were made.
You were created to play
only your small part; whatever is within your hands;
whatever is the now of your heart.

Gideon Heugh
Poem is © Gideon Heugh



Week four: Open to creation

**'In the beginning God created
the heavens and the earth.'**

Genesis 1:1

Day 20: The Christ-ness of creation

Monday 13 March

**'Through [Christ] all things
were made; without him
nothing was made that
has been made.'**

John 1:3

It is the first warm day of the year; the first day in which spring seems more than a dream. The sky is stop-and-stare blue, with not a cloud in sight.

I step out onto my small patch of lawn, bare feet sinking into the dew-wet grass. I breathe. And then (I don't know why it happens, but it does) a thought strikes me: I am standing amid a weaving of Christ.

The sun offering me its warmth has been made by Christ, through Christ and for Christ. The grass on which I stand has been made by Christ, through Christ, and for Christ. The soil beneath that grass has been made by Christ, through Christ, and for Christ.

We are all Christ's handiwork – worm and rock and ocean and mountain and songbird and cloud and tree and human being.

This Christ-ness of our world has a startling implication: all things in creation are sacred. All things have their place. All things belong. How could they not, having been brought into being by and through and for Christ?

*Christ of creation, thank you for the beauty of this world.
Open our eyes and ears and hearts to the weavings you
have wrought. Help us to see creation as sacred, and to see
the wonder in all things – including ourselves. Amen.*

Gideon Heugh

Day 21:

You are nature

Tuesday 14 March

‘God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.’

Genesis 1:31

It was joy that made this world: God declares over everything he makes, ‘It is good... It is good... It is good.’

This declaration was reaffirmed with the incarnation – the eternal Christ becoming flesh in the body of the man Jesus. God became part of this physical world. Jesus belonged here, and so do you.

We must open ourselves to wider creation.

Breathe the larger air beyond our walls. Put our hands into the soil. Get dirt beneath our nails. Spend time among the trees. Walk barefoot on grass and sand and rock. Listen to songbirds. Learn their names. Stare at the stars. Know the cycle of the moon. Move our animal bodies. Learn what the worm does, and why it keeps us alive. Seek out wildflowers. See meals as sacred.

God created a dazzling world, one that reflects the divine glory (Psalm 97:6). Go – rediscover the place where you belong.

God of nature, we long to belong somewhere. Yet, you have made this extraordinary world for us to live in. Help us to see this. Help us to know it. Help us to reconnect with the earth, and with all other living things. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 22:

Who is responsible?

Wednesday 15 March

‘They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth...’

Genesis 1:26, NLT

‘You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know.’ – William Wilberforce.

A couple of years ago, a group of Tearfund staff sat in the crypt of a church in London, painting letters on sheets to make a banner of this quote. Our eyes had been opened to the disasters unfolding because of climate change.

Since then, more eyes have been opened. This last year has brought the climate crisis into stark focus with droughts, heatwaves, floods and failed harvests.

Humanity’s calling from the beginning has been to ‘reign’ over creation. But before we get ideas above our station, we should remember that we are to reign God’s way – as servants. We are to serve and care for the fish, birds, plants... all our global neighbours! How do we follow this calling? We choose to not look away. We take action personally and we challenge those with power to do the right thing.

Forgive us, Jesus, when we are tempted to look the other way. Help us to follow your example, and be servant leaders. Amen.



In 2023, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve creation by helping to end plastic pollution. Visit tearfund.org/action to find out more.

Billie Anderson

Billie works in Tearfund’s Advocacy Team

Day 23: Angels and insects

Thursday 16 March

**'To the Lord your God belong
the heavens, even the
highest heavens, the earth
and everything in it.'**

Deuteronomy 10:14

In her book *Why Rebel*, Jay Griffiths writes: 'I wish that everyone who said they believed in angels would actually believe in insects.'

One third of all crop production on Earth relies on pollinators such as bees and other insects. Nearly 800 million people currently don't have enough food to eat – if insect populations continue to decline, that number will skyrocket.

Our mistreatment of God's creation also accelerates flooding: trees and coral reefs – which are being destroyed by human activity – are natural flood defences. The clearing of rainforests meanwhile releases huge amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, as well as reducing the Earth's ability to absorb them – accelerating climate change.

If we truly love Christ, we need to love both people and wider creation. The two are inseparable. The church must stand against anything that prevents life – all life – from flourishing.

God of creation, we repent for the way we have abused this earth – the poisoned rivers, the toxic fumes, the polluted seas, the species we have made extinct. Forgive us, and, out of love for you and your creation, help us to change. Amen.

Gideon Heugh



Day 24: The gratitude solution

Friday 17 March

‘Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.’

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Gratitude is not an easy thing to practice at times like these. When living through such a lengthy period of uncertainty and sorrow, giving thanks can feel like the last thing we want to do.

But what if gratitude did not need to be a casualty of these difficult days, and instead could be a remedy for them?

Gratitude is an antidote to despair. It reminds us that, no matter what else is going on, there is always much we can love. It is often when gratitude feels like the hardest thing to do that it is the most important thing to do. You do not need to feel grateful to give thanks, but giving thanks can make you feel more grateful.

We are unlikely to protect what we do not love, and we are unlikely to love what we do not know. Gratitude can bring us into a greater knowing of the world; it nourishes our love, making it grow and, in doing so, making us want to do more to protect it.

Try one of these three prayer exercises over the next few days: say grace before a meal, offering thanks for the food and the people who grew it. Take a gratitude walk, in which you observe the world around you and give thanks for what you see. Or keep a gratitude journal, in which every day you thank God for something about creation that you love.

Gideon Heugh

Day 25: A prayer for creation

Saturday 18 March

‘God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.’

Genesis 1:31 CJB

For this devotion, I’m going to need you to find a tree. It could be one in a garden, a park, or just on the street near your place of work. If possible, sit beneath or near one as you read this prayer.

Lord, how wonderful your creation is, the place we call home. May we be reminded each day to open ourselves to experience the beauty that is creation.

We thank you for the trees – as they are vital to all life. Trees are in the first page of Genesis and in the last page of Revelation. They are in the first Psalm and first page of the New Testament, and they mark the spot of many major events in the Bible.

Lord, help us protect your trees, and all creation, not just because they are part of your world, which sustains us with life, but because they hold together your land, which protects our neighbours from floods and landslides. Because they are a sign that life is near, and water, shelter, and sustenance is possible.

Lord, would we see a tree and be reminded of your goodness, faithfulness and provision, and would we remember our responsibility to care for creation and for our neighbours. Amen.

Laura Young

Laura is an environmentalist and Tearfund Ambassador

Day 26: Anxious for the world

Sunday 19 March

‘For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen...’

Romans 1:20

Anxious for the world on a spring morning

*There is pink in the sky, the blackbirds
are singing; and the plants are throwing forth
new green. Understand this: the ripening buds
on magnolia and camellia are not mere hints.
Yes the planes are bellowing overhead;
yes the boney rope of terror is tightening
around the world; yes my soul is battered and weary
and I am hardly without blame.
Yet the trees are silhouetted
against quite the shade of blue;
the wrens and the robins are presenting the case
for life; and fear is not alone in my blood
(coffee and the word are waking me up) –
under the pink streaks in the sky
I am deciding to go on.*

Gideon Heugh

Poem is © Gideon Heugh



Week five:

Open to ourselves

‘I praise you because I am fearfully
and wonderfully made; your works are
wonderful, I know that full well.’

Psalms 139:14

Day 27:

When you feel overwhelmed

Monday 20 March

‘So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.’

Isaiah 41:10

Five things you can do when life feels overwhelming:

1. **Nothing.** You can't do everything. So many things are beyond your control – cast them upon the God who loves you. Listen to your weariness. Make a habit of taking breaks.
2. **Unplug.** Your brain is not built to handle the volume of information the modern world throws at it. Put up boundaries. Take regular time away from screens. Remove the apps you need to remove.
3. **Go deeper.** Material things can only ever skim the surface of our soul. This can leave us feeling numb. Spirit dwells in the depths. Art speaks to our hallowed interiors: read poetry, listen to music (really listen), dance, sing, paint – get out of the shallows.
4. **Have fun.** Joy is an act of defiance; delight is a form of resistance. Relentlessly pursue wonder. Chase after beauty. Find what makes your soul sing. Splash about in your aliveness. Say to the dark: ‘I am still luminous.’
5. **Connect.** Reach out. Open up – to God, to others. Take a step towards another soul. Everything is more bearable when we decide not to bear it alone. We are made for each-otherness.

Gideon Heugh

Day 28:

The physicality of hope

Tuesday 21 March

‘Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”’

Mark 5:36

Hope isn't just a concept. You can see it. You can touch it. It is happening right now within your body.

Every day, more than a kilogram of cells in your body will die – and be replaced by brand new ones. Every second, 100 billion neurons in your brain are firing off dozens of messages, each saying ‘Live. Begin. Move. Continue. Grow.’

Right now, across the northern hemisphere, plants and animals are noticing that the days are growing longer. Roots are detecting the building warmth within the soil. Subtle changes in air, earth and light are inspiring the web of life to plan its resurgence.

Sap is rising. Seeds are germinating. Stems are pushing through the dirt towards a dream of sky. Birds who have spent the winter away are preparing for their journey home. Others are beginning to try out their spring songs.

You don't need to conjure up hope. It's in your DNA. It's humming within the forces that sustain the universe. It's everywhere.

Lord, we declare your truths: the darker days will end. There is nothing uncertain about that. There is decay, and there is new life. Skies turn black, stones are rolled away. All fades, all begins again. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Lent Appeal

Tearfund works through local churches around the world to love and empower people like Fidel.

To learn more about this vital work, visit tearfund.org/lentbook or scan the QR code.



📷 Fidel used to work at a dangerous gold mine, but is now planning to start his own telephone business
Photo: Thiombiano Diayadibi
Emmanuel Benjamin/Tearfund



Day 29: The power within us

Wednesday 22 March

‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.’

Galatians 2:20

Fidel had reached rock bottom. He was working in an illegal gold mine in his community, in central Ivory Coast. His dream was to start a mobile phone banking business but he took a job down the mines to support his three sisters.

The mines are dangerous. One of Fidel's friends died after being trapped in a tunnel. Filled with despair, Fidel spent the night drinking with friends but became separated from them. He heard a woman proclaiming the good news about Jesus. She said, ‘It is the Lord who is calling you...’

He surrendered his life to Christ at that moment. Finding his faith and joining his local church have made all the difference. At church, he received Tearfund training in how to set up a business. He left the mine to work as a farmer for a church elder, saving money to achieve his dream.

‘I have the assurance that a bright life is in store for me,’ says Fidel. ‘Pray for me that I will stay in the Lord.’

Lord Jesus, thank you for sending the woman to speak to Fidel. We ask that his dream to start a business and support his sisters will become a reality. And we pray he will stay close to you, Lord. Amen.

Noorie Dudley Sam

Noorie is Tearfund's Country Director for Mano River

Day 30:
You're (just)
a person

Thursday 23 March

**'I do not understand what I do.
For what I want to do I do not
do, but what I hate I do.'**

Romans 7:15

You did something wrong. Welcome to the club. There are billions of us. You're not a bad person. You're just a person. A person – like all of us –doing their best in a messy, fallen world.

You're the product of your upbringing, your education, social norms, random circumstances, genetics, government policy, solar activity, tech companies spending billions of dollars a year manipulating your behaviour, what you read, what you watch, your friends, your colleagues, the weather, your culture, what you eat, your hormones, geopolitical turmoil, your blood sugar level, the vagaries of the human brain... and who knows what else.

You're not a bad person. You're just a person. And every day, God's mercies are as fresh as the dew. Every day, you get to have another go. Every day, you can adjust your trajectory. Every day, you get the opportunity to love as we have been loved. As we are and always will be loved. That doesn't mean we excuse the awful. We aim high. We fight for justice. We build a better world. But we do it in all our glorious imperfection, understanding that everyone else is imperfect too. Don't redouble your efforts. Double down on grace.


God, thank you for loving me unconditionally. Help me to do the same. Thank you for loving others unconditionally. Help me to do the same. In Jesus' name, amen.

Gideon Heugh



Day 31: Reclaiming the Sabbath

Friday 24 March

 ‘Six days you shall labour
and do all your work, but the
seventh day is a sabbath to
the Lord your God.’

Exodus 20:9-10

My struggle with a Sabbath is not completing everything I feel needs to be done – all of it specifically by me of course – on time. Yet God, who is infinite and inexhaustible, commands us to stop. Even if the work isn’t done.

But what if we don’t finish because our task list is longer than God intended? How can we be attentive to his call on us for the week ahead so that our to-do list is a joint one with him? How do we learn to lean into God’s heart to focus on tasks that he prioritises, rather than appointing ourselves to do more than was ever required of us? Would rest come easier?

God gave us the Sabbath to remind us that our value does not derive from our work. We are not production machines. We are human beings, not human doings. Perhaps, with the busyness that often comes with church on a Sunday, we have lost sight of that.


Lord, who are we to know better than you what needs to be completed? Help us to be open to your assignment for the week ahead. Your nudging on what needs to be prioritised. Your permission on what can wait. Your help to trust fully, making time for you our top priority. Amen.

Jen Clark

Jen works in Tearfund’s Scotland Team

Day 32: A prayer for you

Saturday 25 March

 ‘For God so loved the
world that he gave his
one and only Son.’

John 3:16

**‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.’
(John 3:16-17)**

Proclaim these biblical truths over yourself today, reading through them (out loud if possible) three times. Revisit them throughout the remainder of Lent.

*Thank you, God, that you created me in your image.
Thank you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Thank you that you know me intimately.
Thank you that you love me unconditionally.
Thank you that nothing can separate me from this love.
Thank you that nothing can distance me from your presence.
Thank you that I can stand unashamed before you.
Thank you that your favour is upon me.
Thank you that your mercy is unending.
Thank you that your Holy Spirit lives in me.
Thank you that your son died for me.
Thank you that he rose from the dead for me.*


Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 33:

The best dancers

Sunday 26 March

 'The Lord is close to
the brokenhearted and
saves those who are
crushed in spirit.'

Psalm 34:18

The best dancers

*Live with your heart facing outwards.
Feed your senses upon the wild-light graces
that tread the banks of the rivers;
that wander amid the hallowing of the trees.
Release your spirit to its original attitude;
the one of blessing, and curiosity, and gift.*

*Do not run from the darkness –
hidden in the folds of the night
are the holiest of the secrets,
waiting for you to lower your guard.*

*Once you have felt how heavy life is
you might quit stomping around;
once you discover how serious life is
you might stop taking yours so seriously.*

*We stand in awe of the angels,
but do they know what it is
to haul themselves
from the cold ground of despair?*


The broken-hearted make the best dancers.

Gideon Heugh

Poem is © Gideon Heugh

Week six:

Open to liberation


 'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on
me, because the Lord has anointed me to
proclaim good news to the poor. He has
sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives and
release from darkness for the prisoners.'

Isaiah 61:1



Day 34: Glorious

Monday 27 March

 'If you want to be the greatest, then live as one called to serve others.'

Mark 10:43 TPT

What does it mean to be glorious? What does it mean to be great, to be accomplished, to lead?

The world has answers to these questions. But they are not God's answers.

The kingdom of God is subversive. It flips ideas and tables on their backs.

Christ taught us how we should lead, and embodied in his life and death what it means to be glorious.

There is a kind of glory that glories not in the self, but quietly and steadfastly follows a higher call. There is a kind of glorious that does not preen, boast or call attention to itself, but is dignified, modest and dutiful.


Faith. Service. Grace. Constancy. Charity. Wisdom. Sacrifice. These are virtues that are not now fashionable, yet are nonetheless desperately needed. Let us open ourselves to them. Let us all 'live as one called to serve others'. Because that is what we are.

Lord Jesus, create in me a servant heart. Give me the courage, conviction and wisdom to follow your example in my life. Help me to serve others, always. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 35: Resistance is spiritual

Tuesday 28 March

 'Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.'

Isaiah 1:17

Christianity stops being the way of Christ when there is even the slightest abuse of power within it.

The deepest energies of the universe are on the side of the marginalised. That is the nature of the divine: to oppose those who oppress; to lift up those who have been knocked down.

The hoarding of power and wealth is an affront to God. With great power comes great inequality: you cannot build a pyramid without breaking someone else's back. So much of the modern world was created by exploiting people living in poverty – pushing them deeper into it.

When there is a growing gap between rich and poor, there is a growing gap between humanity and divine will. The way of Christ is to call this out. It is to redress the balance. It is to fight for justice. This is why Tearfund exists – why the church exists.

The way of Christ is the expansion of liberation. It is radical inclusion. It is the melting down of ego in order to build something better: a world of each-otherness in which justice flows like a river (Amos 5:24). Resistance is spiritual.

God, teach us how to do right. Help us to seek justice. Help us to defend the oppressed. We take up the cause of the fatherless; we plead the case of the widow. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 36:

No problem too big?

Wednesday 29 March

'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty.'

1 Samuel 17:45

David knew his best battle strategy was God's strength and power. There's no way David should have won against Goliath! Yet, the Bible reminds us, 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31).

Our God is mightier than the battles that we face. The cross took victory over death and sin! Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to help your church endure (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Even though Saul tried to give David his armour, helmet and sword, David chose his old weapons that had remained faithful – his staff, slingshot and stones. Let's choose to fight with the faithful tools of a disciple – the power of the word of God, prayer and our church community.

'In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33). Past tense. Jesus has already overcome!

God, open our eyes as you did with Elisha's servant to reveal how heaven's armies are protecting your people. Thank you for actively bringing justice, declaring peace over crises and restoration over brokenness. Ignite our faith, again, for your power to equip us and for your global church to see the world restored. Amen.

Anna Wooding

Anna works in Tearfund's Youth Team



Day 37: Liberated from arrival

Thursday 30 March

‘There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.’

Ecclesiastes 3:1

So often we are waiting for something. A solution to be imparted. A breakthrough to occur. A dream to be fulfilled.

Yet, we can be so desperate to cross that threshold of arrival that we miss what is happening in the in-between. We’re so desperate to reach the promised land that we fail to see the life that is held in the wilderness. We’re so obsessed with the product that we miss the process.

Life happens at the speed of now. It is happening today, not tomorrow. If we say, ‘I’ll be happy/enlightened/content when I get [x],’ then we’ll miss life.

We need to learn to live in the grace of the present, not the unforgiving unreality of ‘if’ and ‘then’ and ‘only’ and ‘when’. We need to be liberated from arrival.

It is easier said than done. But we are where we are, so we might as well look around and see what joys or truths it might hold.

Life is unfolding, and the invitation is open.

God, help me to live in the now. Help me to see what you have placed in front of me, rather than looking always at the distance. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 38: The prophetic voice

Friday 31 March

‘His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.’

Jeremiah 20:9

‘Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and humanity.’ Abraham Joshua Heschel

Piety isn’t clean. The way of Christ isn’t gilded. It is a ragged, dogged, dreadfully-felt thing.

It is the psalmist smashing together hope and despair at the bottom of a bone-lined pit. It is the prophet hammering at the walls of the temple, shouting until their throat bleeds that God’s cold fury is set upon those who allow injustice to exist. It is the woman wiping tears and perfume on Jesus – the rabbi who pointed out that it is not the rich or powerful who are blessed; that love doesn’t look like your comfort.

Piety is a group of dreamers huddled in a small room, dangerously bold, trading whispers of revelation. The pious are radicals. They are found at the edges – rooted in justice and mercy and a wild each-otherness. They walk humbly, but relentlessly.

This is our call; the call of the prophetic.

God, I open myself to you. I choose to become your voice in the world. I want to feel what you feel, and to act accordingly. Amen.

Gideon Heugh



Day 39: A liberation prayer

Saturday 1 April

‘This is a day to remember forever—the day you left Egypt, the place of your slavery.’

Exodus 13:3

In Luke 4:18, quoting Isaiah, Jesus states an important part of his mission is to ‘set the oppressed free’. As you come to pray today, trust that Jesus wants to set you free from everything that holds you back. Find a quiet place to help you stay focused as you pray through these points.

Lord, I thank you for your love and mercy. I appreciate your grace over us that sustains me and keeps me in relationship with you.

Lord, just as you brought Israel out of slavery, I ask you to liberate me from every chain of the enemy that limits me and holds me down. I break them now in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

I pray that I will be totally liberated from disappointment and failure so I can fulfil my potential in you. I decree freedom, restoration and fruitfulness over my life as I seek to live for your glory. I pray these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Leona Bird

Leona works in Tearfund’s African and Caribbean Engagement Team

📷 Photo: Abhishek Koli/Unsplash

Day 40:

Your anger

Sunday 2 April

‘God is an honest judge.
He is angry with the
wicked every day.’
Psalm 7:11, NLT

Your anger

*There is always plenty to be angry about;
more than we could ever handle.
Make sure, then, that you do not give your anger
to the small. Leave the slights, the entitlements,
the hurts that you can't do anything about
except wallow, or heal.*

*There is always plenty to be angry about;
injustice and suffering and greed
are real. Heaven needs your anger,
so long as you give it direction;
so long as it joins with the cries of others
and in deliberate, relentless movements
becomes the transformation of the world.*

*There is always plenty to be angry about;
make sure, then, that you do not only
get angry.*

Gideon Heugh
Poem is © Gideon Heugh




Week seven:

Open to resurrection

‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
the new creation has come: the
old has gone, the new is here!’
2 Corinthians 5:17

Day 41: Miracles and tragedies

Monday 3 April

 'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'

John 16:33

Dreams really do come true... except when they don't. You can achieve anything you set your mind to... except when you can't. Miracles happen all the time... and so do tragedies.

Some things will turn out better than expected. Some things will turn out worse. There will be joy, pleasure, wonder and delight. And there will be grief, agony, anxiety and despair. There will be moments that take your breath away, and there will be moments when it feels as though you can't breathe.

Toxic positivity doesn't help anyone. But neither does cynicism. To be human is to know the bitter and the beautiful; to accept that they both belong. Mourning can turn into dancing. Dancing can turn into mourning.


This doesn't make us love life any less, but love it all the more. It is precious because at any moment it could break. So we embrace it; because of the miracles, and because of the tragedies.

God, help me to hold the tension between accepting life as it is and longing for more. Guide me through both the miracles and tragedies – help me to know your presence in both. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 42: Nothing can separate

Tuesday 4 April

 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus...'

Romans 8:38-39

'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'
(Romans 8:38-39)

The worst thing that you have done cannot separate you from God's love.

Those habits that you wish you didn't have cannot separate you from God's love.

The fears and doubts that you keep only to yourself cannot separate you from God's love.

Nothing in creation can do it. Space and time themselves cannot do it. Death cannot do it.

God's love for you is invincible. And it is woven into every cell in your body.

Shame is a sham. It is not of God; God is love.

Open yourself to this love. It is always open to you.

Loving one, thank you that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ. Help me to take hold of this reality in my heart. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Lent Appeal

Countless people like Innocent are still in desperate need. We believe it's the call of the church to respond, and we won't stop until poverty stops.

To discover more about Tearfund's work, visit tearfund.org/lentbook or scan the QR code today.



📷 Innocent's life was transformed after an intervention from his local pastor

Photo: Thiombiano Diouyadibi
Emmanuel Benjamin/Tearfund



Day 43: From surviving to thriving

Wednesday 5 April

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'

John 10:10

Innocent was ten when his father first allowed him to go to school. Not used to writing, his hands were too shaky to hold a pencil. The same year, he went to work in the gold mines close to his community in central Ivory Coast.

But the mines were dangerous – two of his friends became trapped in a tunnel and died. So Innocent gave up and started working as a farm labourer. Now, aged 30 and married with two children, it doesn't provide enough income for his family.

Four years ago, Pastor Edward from his local church started inviting Innocent to his home to talk about God and faith. Innocent's relationship with God was restored, he started attending services and joined the church's business training programme – supported by Tearfund.

Innocent has plans to save up and open a shop: 'I'm going to work hard in order to open my DIY store,' he says. 'Pray to God for me that one day I will be great – successful.'

Lord Jesus, we thank you for drawing close to Innocent, and that he has been welcomed back to church. We pray that his plans to open a DIY store will thrive, as he puts his new-found business skills into practice. Amen.

Veena O'Sullivan

Veena is Tearfund's International Director

Day 44: The way of non-violence

Thursday 6 April

‘My kingdom is not of this world.
If it were, my servants would
fight... But now my kingdom is
from another place.’

John 18:36

Jesus – betrayed by his friend. Jesus – taken by force to stand trial. Jesus – denied by those he openly loved.

I feel anger on his behalf. It swells like sadness in my bones, deep and heavy. Eyes closed, past events and emotions play in my mind, of times I have felt injustice, witnessed injustice, been denied justice.

Jesus – stands calmly. Jesus – speaks firmly, but gently. Jesus – chooses peace.

It was not easy; the night was dark and close, and sweat mingled with tears and blood as Jesus came to terms with what he needed to do.

Peace can feel like an aching dream when you're still in the midst of darkness; when the sun has yet to rise. What is it that keeps us alive in these raw moments before dawn breaks?

This Maundy Thursday, we weep for the injustices in the world. We weep for the peace we ache to see. Where there is anger and pain, deep within us and jarring to get out, we remember the path of peace so gently trodden, so gently spoken, by a rabbi.

Let us flee from cycles of retribution – it is just chains that keep the anger locked to us. As we share in bread and wine, we remember that there is another way. A new kingdom. There is peace. And there is hope. A sunrise.

Jesus, you are the way, the truth and the life. I lay down my kingdom and humbly seek to help you build yours. Let your kingdom come today in my life. Let me be an outpouring of your justice, love, mercy and grace to others. Amen.

Rachael Adams

Rachael is the Editor of One Voice in Prayer



Day 45:

The secret name of every death

Good Friday 7 April

‘Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.’

John 12:24

‘The secret name of every death is life again.’ Mary Oliver

At Easter, death’s curtain is pulled back and we see the smiling God behind.

All those times we die: the disappointments, the broken hearts, the rejections, the failures, the sorrow, the grief – all those fallings onto the ground.

Suffering is real. Not all of it happens for a reason. Sometimes pain is just pain. Yet it is not there to be ignored, or trampled over in the rush for a supposedly distant heaven.

The darkness is real, but so is the dawn.

After the empty tomb, Mary found a gardener – someone to tend to all those fallen seeds. Someone to help reveal all of the heaven that is hidden in our deaths.

God the gardener, care for the seeds that have fallen to the ground in my life. Help me to see that nothing ever truly ends, but is only transformed. Help me to see that the secret name of every death is life again. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Day 46:

A resurrection prayer

Saturday 8 April

‘Let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy.’

Isaiah 26:19

God of resurrection,

*I give you my failures.
I give you my disappointments.
I give you my sorrows.
I give you my worries.
I give you my pain.
I give you my problems.
I give you my doubts.*

*I let go of what I need to let go.
I let fall to the ground what must fall.
I bury the seeds in the soil.*

Christ, you are alive. Hallelujah.

*Let there be redemption. Let there be restoration.
Let there be resurrection.*

In Jesus’ name, amen

Anna Laszlo

Anna is Chair of Tearfund’s Board

Day 47:

What to do with all those tombs of yours

Easter Sunday 9 April

‘Why do you look for the living among the dead?’

Luke 24:6



‘They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!”’ (Luke 24:2-6)

There is the miraculous, and then there is the carrying on. There is Easter Sunday, and then there is the rest of your life. The tomb is empty... so what's next?

Jesus was buried in someone else's tomb – that of the still-living Joseph of Arimathea. It was normal practice in that context for tombs to be constructed in advance. Digging your own grave was not a metaphor.

I've been thinking about all the tombs I've built for myself

while still alive. All the things I've said about myself like, 'I'm not good enough to...' (Or simply, 'I'm not good enough.')

Or what about: 'I'm not smart enough.' 'I'm not attractive enough.' 'I've made too many mistakes.' 'I'm too old.' 'I'm too young.' 'What if I fail?'

And then there are the tombs that other people build for us. Those comments people make that eat their way into us: 'You're a sinner.' 'You're a disappointment.' 'You're not good enough.'

We can spend our whole lives trapped in these tombs. Except we're not trapped. We're just so used to our situation that we don't look up to see the truth:

Which is that the stones have been rolled away.

The world is out there, open, full of invitation. The angels are sitting outside, waiting for you to take those steps beyond the threshold.

You are not what other people have said about you. You are not those things you have said about yourself in the dark nights of your soul. The stones have been rolled away. The doorway is open. Step out. And keep stepping out, as many times as you need to. Easter is always.

We can all come back from whatever death we have experienced. There is no pit deep enough – whether dug by yourself or others or any of the many, very real tragedies that can befall us – that cannot be climbed out of.

That's what's next.

Gideon Heugh

📷 Photo: Bruno van der Kraan/Unsplash

**‘For everyone who asks
receives; the one who
seeks finds; and to the
one who knocks, the
door will be opened.’**

Matthew 7:8

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