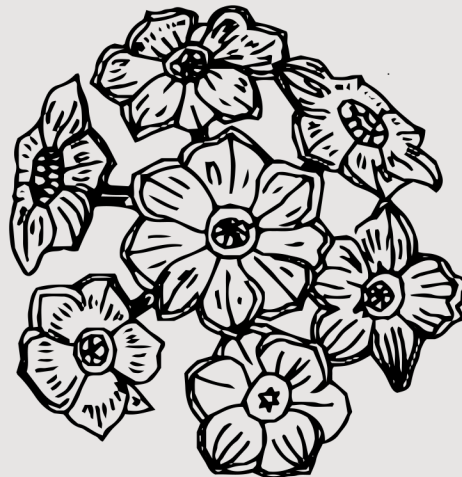


WEEK
06

BLESSED ARE



THOSE WHO MOURN

For When So Many Are Suffering (and You Don't Know What to Do)

Read:

“For when so many are suffering”
from **page 156** of *The Lives We Actually Have*

[John
11:1-45](#)

Ask

Re-read John 11:1-45, but place yourself in the scene. Where are you standing? What do you see? What emotion bubbles up? Imagine what it would have been like to have been there, to see Jesus' tears for his friend. This is the face of God's compassion for us in our sorrow.

Do

Pull out a piece of paper or a notebook. Make a list of the people in your life in desperate need of healing or hope—of all those you know who are suffering right now.



PRAY:

Just speak the names you listed aloud to God. No need to fill in any details if you don't want to. God knows. It's a way to overcome the feeling that you can't possibly make a big enough difference to help all the sick ones, the hurting ones in your awareness. God hears you.

For The Ones Who Choose to Break their Hearts for Ours

Read:

“For the ones who choose to break their hearts for ours” from **page 158** of *The Lives We Actually Have*

[Isaiah 58:6-9](#)

Ask

Isaiah 58:6-9 describes the religious act of fasting as intrinsically linked to action. Do you imagine the religious acts you practice (prayer, fasting, giving, worship, attending church) as more for you or for others—or maybe both?

Listen

Certain people decide to make other people's pain their own. Gary Haugen, founder and CEO of International Justice Mission, is one of those people. But how do you sustain heartbreaking work? “Joy,” Gary says, “is the oxygen for doing hard things.” Listen here and be encouraged:

“Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt is to be taken seriously, that the hurt is not to be accepted as normal and natural but is an abnormal and unacceptable condition for humanness.

— Walter Brueggemann



LISTEN HERE



18

OR IN THE [SPOTIFY PLAYLIST](#)

PRAY:

God, show me the gift I have to offer others. Blow your winds of love all around my efforts, so they have that whiff of joy about them. Amen.

For The Ones Who Bear Witness

Read:

“For the ones who bear witness”
from **page 160** of *The Lives We Actually Have*

[Acts
1:7-9](#)

“Death always thinks of us eventually. The trick is to find the joy in the interim, and make good use of the days we have.”

— Ann Patchett, *These Precious Days*

Ask

Jesus’ friends were those who followed so closely, they knew every one of his ways. They were witnesses to the big stuff—his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension into heaven. But also the little details too—how he parted his hair, his lunchtime preferences, and the face he made when he was really upset. Think of one close person in your life—your best friend, your child, a partner, or co-worker. What are the quirky and individual and irreplaceable things you love about them?

Listen

Bestselling novelist Ann Patchett knows how to walk right up to the edge with people she loves. She is the friend who sits with you during chemo, or lets you spill your secrets in the car. She shares what powerful lessons she learned early on about how to approach suffering with humility, knowing you can rarely change a life, but you can be there to witness and be amazed.



LISTEN HERE



19

OR IN THE [SPOTIFY PLAYLIST](#)

PRAY:

O God, I love that you know me completely, and that you make it possible for me to know you through Jesus Christ. Thank you that you sent your Holy Spirit to be with us, through these precious days. Show us how to move through them as those who are truly alive. As witnesses to you, with your joy shining through. Amen.

BEHOLD.

THIS IS NOT A
PROBLEM TO
BE *SOLVED*.

THIS IS A PERSON
TO BE *LOVED*.

from “for the ones who bear
witness” on page 161
of *The Lives We Actually Have*



For When Loving Your Enemy Seems Too Big an Ask

Read:

“For when loving your enemy seems too big an ask” from **page 164** of *The Lives We Actually Have*

[Matthew 5:43-48](#)

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only Light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only Love can do that.”

— Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ask

Who is your enemy or arch nemesis? Maybe a rude neighbor or that &\$%! who cut you off in traffic. Or maybe it is a sibling or in-law you can't seem to forgive. That colleague who wronged you or that friend you always seem to be competing with. Hold their name (or face, if you can bear it) in your mind.

Reflect

Madeleine L'Engle said, “We must bless without wanting to manipulate. Without insisting that everything be straightened out right now. Without insisting that our truth be known. This means simply turning whoever it is we need to bless over to God, knowing that God's powerful love will do what our own feeble love or lack of it won't. I have suggested that it is a good practice to believe in six impossible things every morning before breakfast, like the White Queen in *Through the Looking Glass*. It is also salutary to bless six people I don't much like every morning before breakfast.” Try blessing your enemy today. How did that make you feel?



PRAY:

Read today's blessing again and make it a prayer, with this particular enemy in mind.

For the Givers Who Need to Receive

Read:

“For the givers who need to receive”
from **page 168** of *The Lives We Actually Have*

[Acts](#)
[20:32-36](#)

Ask

When you read today’s blessing, did someone come to mind who needs this kind of support? Or perhaps it’s you? How can you show support to them today?

Do

Think of what would feel like support to the person you thought of and do it. Send an encouraging text or a coffee gift card. Offer to mow their lawn or drop off a meal. If you’re the one in need of support, will you tell a friend how they could be supportive of you today? It can feel difficult to ask for what we need, but shouldering one another’s burdens is what can help get us through sometimes.



PRAY:

God, help me be open to see the suffering around me. Give me the willingness to come close, and be with them right there in the hard place. Show me what’s important in their world right now, and please give me the words to say, or perhaps even just the quality of silence that is most meaningful. Amen.

For Your Great, Big, Dumb Heart

Read:

“For your great, big, dumb heart”
from **page 170** of *The Lives We Actually Have*

[John](#)
[15:9-17](#)

Ask

Think of someone whose love for you made a huge difference. Maybe it was a grandparent or teacher, friend or pastor. What about their love felt transformative?

Do

Write a little Valentine’s note for the person you thought of in the previous question. (Yes, I know it’s a little late for a Valentine’s card.) It can be someone who is no longer with us or someone you have lost touch with. The act of writing the card is as important as the act of sending it. Express to them the way you felt changed by their love. How did it feel to be loved like that?



PRAY:

Thank you, God, that your love ever reached me, and for that person who first brought it to me through their love beyond limits. I knew even then that this was different. Important. Irreplaceable. God, help me be that difference for someone else. Amen.

The Sixth Sunday

Palm Sunday - Mini Easter

This Sunday is another Mini-Easter. It is also the day we celebrate Palm Sunday—when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Read the story found in John 12:12-18. Put yourself in the story. Who are you? What are you experiencing? What emotions do you feel? Then read “For Palm Sunday” on page 202 in *The Lives We Actually Have*.

