

JOURNEY WITH JESUS

*"Jesus himself came up and walked
along with them."*
— Luke 24:45

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025 - DAY 15

Recognizing Jesus

Suggested Bible Reading: Genesis 50:19-20

Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Prayer

By Carol Veldman Rudie, who is active in her classis, occupies pulpits, and has been published in The Banner and Reformed Worship. She volunteers at The Museum of Russian Art, creating presentations to present to groups around the country.

Our Father who lives in the vastness of eternity,
may your name be valued and praised
above all other things to which we show loyalty.

Bring your kingdom actions into the chaos
of our little worlds and power struggles
so that your vision for your creation
prevails over our self-centered manipulations.

We plead for the hungry who live in food deserts
and lack resources.

Move us, who have plenty,
to repent of gluttony and greed
and, instead, to create ways for all to flourish.

In all the ways we have left your purposes undone, despised, or neglected,
forgive us.

We promise to forgive our neighbors
as you have so generously forgiven us.

Lead us away from all evil,
help us learn from our testing,
strengthen us against temptation.

For to you belong all things on earth
and in the heavenlies.

To you belong our hearts, our minds, our actions.
May they please you always.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- To whom is God calling me to extend forgiveness or to embody grace?
- Regarding which griefs, hurts, or tragedies do I need to adopt a posture of trust—in the God who is able to work all things together for good?

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MONDAY, MAY 19, 2025 - DAY 16

Recognizing Jesus

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 3

Lord, how many are my foes!

How many rise up against me!

Many are saying of me,

"God will not deliver him."

But you, Lord, are a shield around me,

my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

I call out to the Lord,

and he answers me from his holy mountain.

I lie down and sleep;

I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.

I will not fear though tens of thousands

assail me on every side.

Arise, Lord!

Deliver me, my God!

Strike all my enemies on the jaw;

break the teeth of the wicked.

From the Lord comes deliverance.

May your blessing be on your people.

Prayer

By Pastor Mike ("Sully") Sullivan, who with his family is grateful to call Worcester, Massachusetts, their home and Emmaus City Church their family. With a smile at God's

wondrous ways, the Sullivans try to weave their presence and time into the lives of neighbors, friends, coworkers, and classmates, seeking to join Jesus in loving others. Sully is ordained in the CRC as a commissioned pastor, and he enjoys being a pastor, spiritual director, chaplain, and friend.

O Lord our God, King of the universe, reveal how you will overcome for your people today. The enemy and accuser seeks to steal, kill, and destroy, but you have come to give us abundant life now and forever. When evil rises against us to enslave us to fear, may your perfect love drive out all fear. When principalities and powers seek to deceive and to divide us, may your Word of grace and truth counter the lies that say God will not deliver us.

Be the shield you are to protect us at synod and in every classis meeting this year. Answer the prayers that are groaned with your Holy Spirit. Lord, you sustain us. Do it again in this season and in this year of our Lord 2025. May we work from the rest you give us, and may we rise to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you and each other. Deliver us from any pride, selfishness, apathy, wrath, or envy.

May your blessing be on your people beyond what we can ask for or imagine. We pray all these things with humility and hope because we get to pray in our family name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- When we experience division in the church, we tend to focus on the role that people play in the division and forget that principalities and powers are also at work. How might this spiritual perspective shape the way we approach division in the church?
- Jesus taught us to pray, “Deliver us from evil.” What evils feel most threatening to you, and how might you trust God’s delivering power in this day?

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TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025 - DAY 17

Recognizing Jesus

Suggested Bible Reading:

(Spanish) Salmo 121:3-4

No permitirá que tu pie resbale; jamás duerme el que te cuida.
Jamás duerme ni se adormece el que cuida de Israel.

Psalm 121:3-4

He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

Dios Nunca Duerme

Por Mirtha Villafane, pastora ordenada de la CRC tiene un M. Div. del Seminario Fuller. Se desempeña como latino Coach Network Developer y es miembro del Consejo Latino. Ella desarrolla estrategias, entrena y equipa a pastores hispanos para un ministerio efectivo.

A veces, la vida puede sentirse agobiante. Ya sea por las demandas del ministerio, las presiones del trabajo o las luchas personales, a menudo llevamos cargas que parecen demasiado pesadas. Nos agotamos física, emocional y espiritualmente. Pero en medio de nuestro cansancio, el Salmo 121:3-4 nos recuerda una verdad hermosa: **Dios nunca duerme.**

A diferencia de nosotros, Dios no se cansa. No toma descansos ni se distrae. Sus ojos siempre están sobre nosotros, asegurándose de que no tropecemos más allá

de Su alcance. Aun cuando nos sentimos solos o inseguros, Dios está activamente sosteniéndonos, guiando nuestros pasos y manteniéndonos firmes.

Esta verdad nos invita a descansar en Él. No tenemos que cargarlo todo solos. Podemos depositar nuestras cargas a Sus pies, sabiendo que Él tiene el control. Cuando dormimos, Él sigue obrando. Cuando nos sentimos débiles, Él sigue siendo fuerte.

Hoy, encuentra consuelo en la presencia inquebrantable de Dios. Confía en que Él te cuida, te protege y te guía. Descansa en la verdad de que Aquel que te sostiene nunca cierra Sus ojos.

Oración (Prayer): *Señor, gracias por velar siempre por mí. Ayúdame a confiar en Tu cuidado y a encontrar descanso en Tu presencia. Amén*

God Never Sleeps

By Mirtha Villafane, an ordained CRC pastor with an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary. She serves as a national Latino coach network developer and is a member of Consejo Latino. She strategizes, coaches, and equips Hispanic pastors for effective ministry.

Life can feel overwhelming at times. Whether it's the demands of ministry, the pressures of work, or personal struggles, we often carry burdens that seem too heavy to bear. Fatigue sets in, and we find ourselves drained—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But in the midst of our exhaustion, Psalm 121:3-4 offers a beautiful reminder: God never sleeps.


Unlike us, God does not grow weary. He does not take breaks or become distracted. His watchful eyes are always on us, ensuring that we do not stumble beyond his reach. Even when we feel alone or uncertain, God is actively sustaining us, guiding our steps, and keeping us steady. This truth invites us to rest in him. We don't have to carry everything on our own. We can lay our burdens at God's feet, knowing that he is in control. When we sleep, he is still working. When we feel weak, he remains strong.

Today, take comfort in God's unwavering presence. Trust that he is watching over us, protecting us, and leading us forward. We are never forgotten, never unseen, and never without his care. Rest in the truth that the One who holds us never closes his eyes.

Prayer: *Lord, thank you for always watching over me. Help me to trust in your care and to find rest in your presence. Amen.*

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How does the truth that God never sleeps invite you to put your trust in him?
- In what parts of your life do you need to trust in God, recognizing that he is still working?



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WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2025 - DAY 18

Recognizing Jesus

Suggested Bible Reading: John 5:16-17

Because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

Prayer

By Rylan Brue, who shares, "I am a third-year M.Div. student at Calvin Theological Seminary hoping to serve in the CRCNA following graduation."

Ever-working God, while we have slept, you have not.

You have kept countless mammal hearts beating, photosynthesizing-leaves breathing, internet servers humming, and constellations twinkling. Before we were born, before mountains were born, before you brought forth this whole wide world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. Forgive us for times when we, with unbelieving worry, make ourselves the exception to your care-full gaze—as if you count all hairs but our own, are present in all workplaces but our own, or guide all denominations but our own. Help us to rest in your all-sufficient work.

Ever-working God, while we have grown discouraged and distracted—often settling for discount kingdoms and half-baked righteousness—you have not.

Like a woman kneading yeast into large measures of flour, you persistently press this world toward your appointed end. Even if our arms ache under the repetitious labors of quiet and holy lives, help us, as members of your church, not to grow weary in doing good. Keep us hungering and thirsting for the real thing, the finished product—your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Ever-working God, while we do not always know how to pray, you are never at a loss for what good gift to give. You know what we need before we ask.


These past few synods have been filled with weighty matters. Forgive us for times when we have not been gentle to people with whom we have disagreed. For this year's delegates we ask for a generous measure of wisdom, clarity of thought, fidelity to Scripture, and Spirit-filled deliberation.

We pray in Jesus' name—whose own work in cross and tomb and ongoing session—is our hope in life and in death. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- What repetitive task could remind me of God's persistent work?
- What is getting in the way of thirsting and hungering for the kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven?



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THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2025 - DAY 19

Recognizing Jesus

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 1:3-6

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Prayer

By Sean Baker, a Christian Reformed minister who serves with Thrive as a ministry consultant for discernment and conflict.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for these words of Paul, written from prison yet filled with joy. Thank you for his example showing that his present circumstances did not dampen his joy. We understand that our present challenges don't have to dampen our joy either. In seasons of difficulty—whether in our own lives, our families, our churches, or our communities—your promises and provisions remain. We rejoice in your faithfulness.

God, I give you thanks every time I remember the people, organizations, and churches who partner in the gospel. . . .


Thank you for the joy these partnerships bring to my life and your world. . . .

I offer these prayers in confidence that you will see to completion the good work you have begun in all of us until the day of Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation:

- Which “gospel partners” (fellow Christians, CRC congregations, partner denominations who may be represented at synod) can I give thanks for today?
- What practices remind me that I, my fellow Christians, and the church are Christ’s good works . . . in progress?



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FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2025 - DAY 20

Were Not Our Hearts Burning within Us?

Introduction

The eyes of Jesus' followers at Emmaus were opened to see Jesus, and he then disappeared from their sight. They came to the realization that they had felt God was at work, even though they hadn't seen it, when they said "Were not our hearts burning within us . . . ?"

God is at work in our world, in our churches, in our communities, and in us. This truth, whether we recognize it or not, gives us hope, brings us peace, and gets us excited for his kingdom. God is at work. He didn't leave us. He didn't abandon us. We may not fully understand what God is up to and how he is working, but we have the assurance that God is moving among us.

Suggested Bible Reading: Luke 24:32

They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Prayer

By Larry Hanthorn, a husband, father, grandfather, and church leader. He is retired from a 35-year career in the software industry and has been a member of the CRC since 1983. Larry is a spiritual prodigal son, having left the faith during his college years and then returned with a fresh encounter of the Lord's grace during his early twenties. Larry and his wife, Sheryl, are active members at Grace Fellowship CRC in Pella, Iowa.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

We gather before you, hearts heavy with the burdens of our denomination and our churches. Many of us are hurt and filled with uncertainty. We seek your comforting presence here today. We remember the words of the disciples in Luke 24:32. Just as their hearts burned within them and were set ablaze with hope, we ask that you ignite within us a renewed sense of your love and grace.

Lord, in our pain and doubt, we often forget that you are walking with us. Open our eyes to your presence as you walk beside us on our journey, even when the path is difficult.

We pray for the healing and restoration of our mind, body, and soul. Wrap your loving arms around us and bring peace to our troubled hearts. Give us the courage to lean on our brothers and sisters, to lift each other up, and to be a source of comfort and support.

In these times of uncertainty, grant us wisdom—may our hearts burn within us as we listen to you speak and walk in your presence. Help us to see the hope and possibilities that lie ahead. Fill our hearts with your promises and give us the courage to face each day with renewed faith and determination.

Lord, help us by your Spirit to lead your church well. Let your light shine through our actions and words, and may we reflect your glory in all that we do for your kingdom's sake.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Can you recall any recent moments when the words of Scripture caused your heart to “burn within you”? What might God be saying to you through them?
- In what ways have you experienced Jesus opening your eyes to his presence beside you in a time of anxiety or difficulty?



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SATURDAY, MAY 24, 2025 - DAY 21

Were Not Our Hearts Burning within Us?

Suggested Bible Reading: Genesis 28:10-16

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

Prayer

By Cath Kortman, a member of Fellowship CRC in Grandville, Michigan. She graduated this year from Calvin University with degrees in philosophy and music and plans to pursue music and worship ministry in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, area.

Triune God,

You are good, great, glorious, and gracious. We have heard the promises of your Son and know that you are with us always, even to the end of the age. Tune our

hearts to you! We confess that we often forget to look for you in the places where we need you most. We confess that we are easily distracted by our own feeble agency and forget that our lives work best when we follow your lead. We lament the times when we have searched for you and our eyes have failed in looking for our God. Teach us to trust that even in our moments of our unawareness, you, Lord, are present among us and hold us fast.

We pray for an awareness of your presence in our past. May we see the way your hand has worked steadily in our lives and in the lives of our churches, guiding us toward your grace. Lord, we pray for an awareness of your presence in this current moment. May we join your Spirit in the sanctifying work taking place right now in our communities. And, Lord, we pray for an awareness of your presence in our future. May we trust in your plan for us as individuals and as a community—your church and your bride.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit we pray.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Spend a few moments praying for an awareness of God at work in your life, perhaps even in the present moment.
- Where have you seen God at work in your life or in the world around you, even though at the time you may not have been aware of it?