

RIVER LENT 2024 | “Anxieties of Modern Life”

RiverNYC Blog



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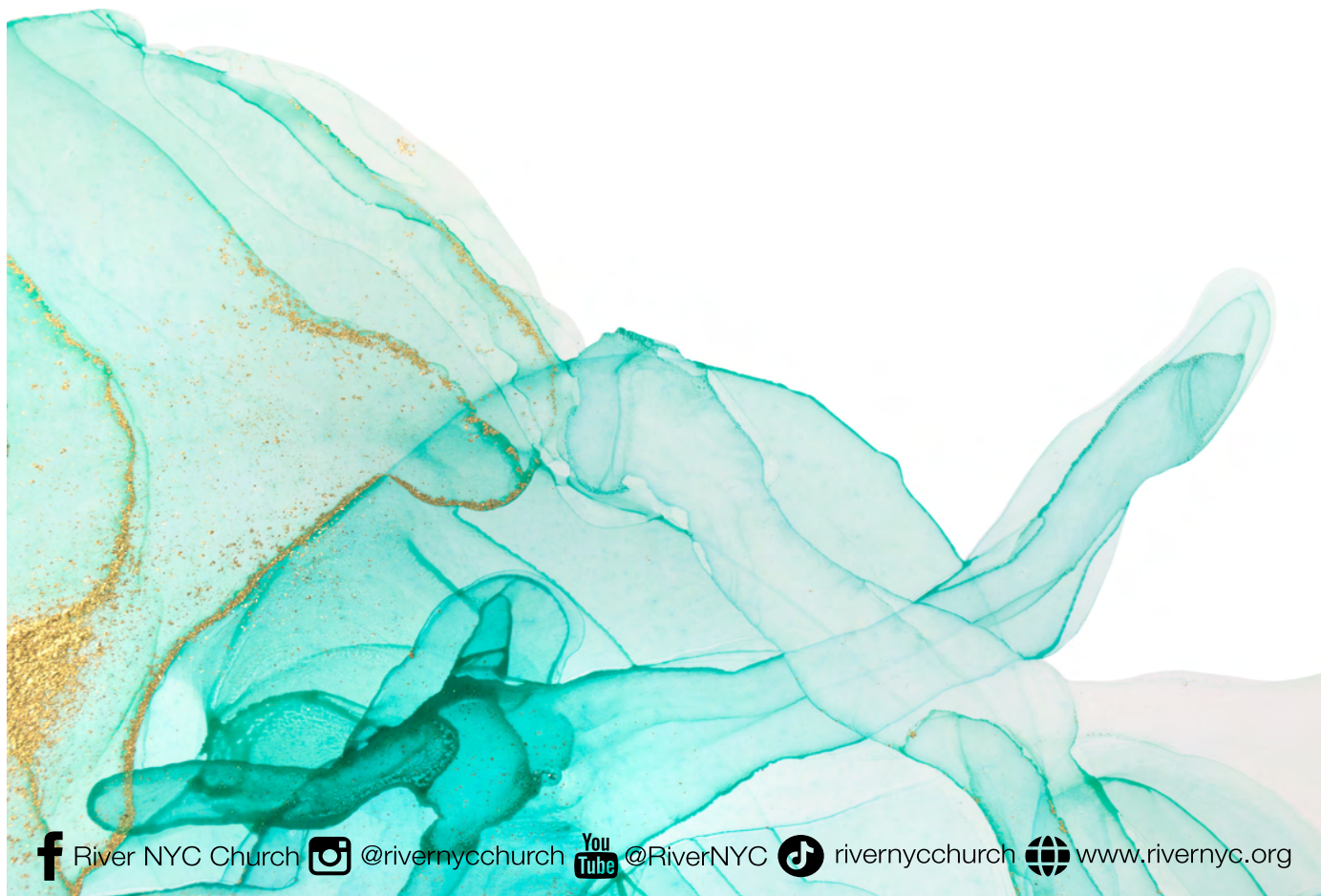
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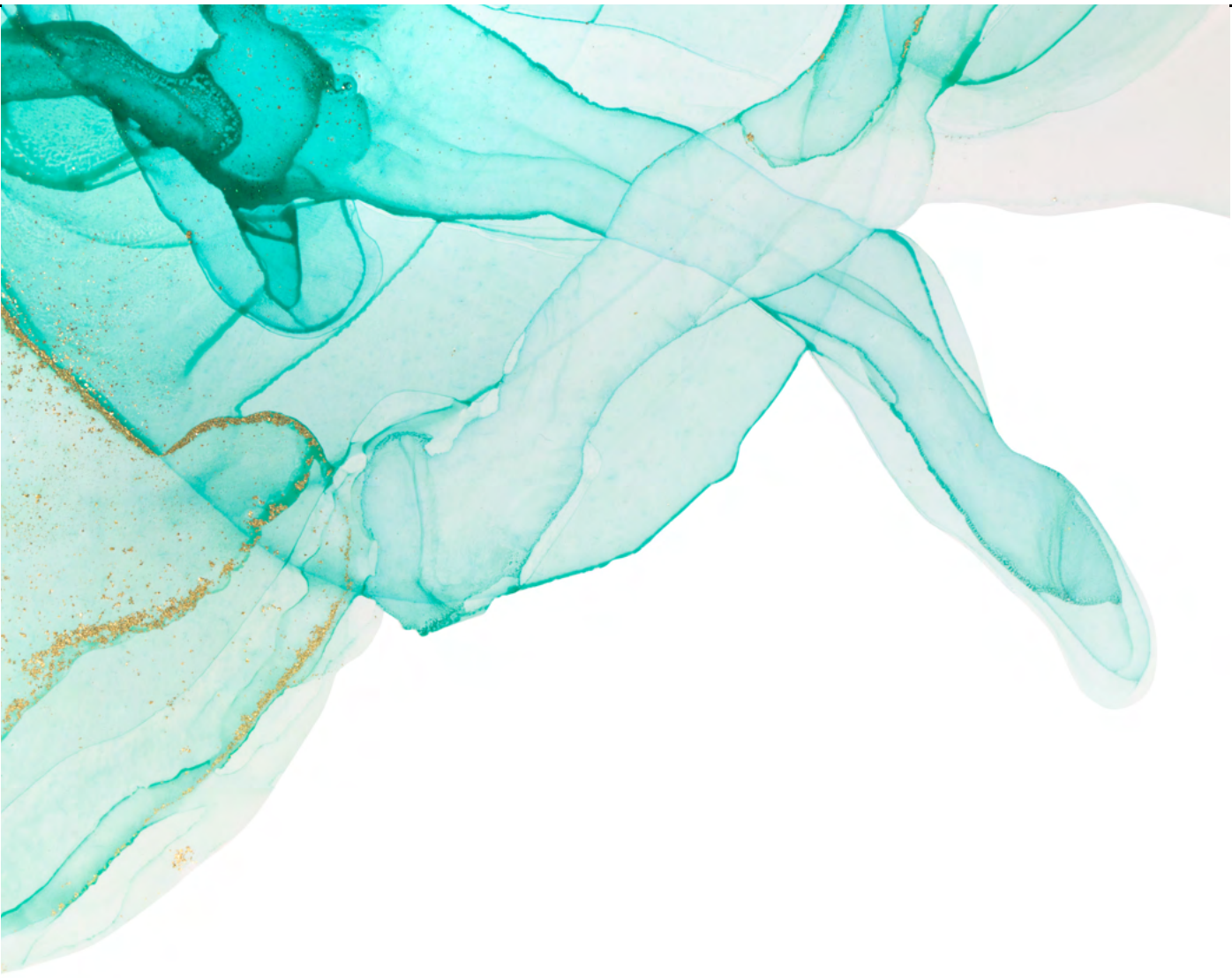


WEEK 5 Devotional Guide | Mar 17, 2024 - Mar 23, 2024

40 Days of Faith

The Healing Waters (Content Created by Reservoir Church)





A phrase popular or more known to non-Natives during the Standing Rock encampment was, *Water is the first medicine*. It is true.

"The First Body is the Water" (excerpt), Natalie Diaz
Postcolonial Love Poem (50).



WEEK 5

THE HEALING WATERS

In our fifth week, our water of life journey takes us to our needs for healing. When we get a cut, the first thing we do is wash it with water. Cleaning with water is the first step in the healing process. We all have a lot of cuts and hurts in various stages of pain and healing. This is true for individuals, families, larger communities, and the world at large. There's a lot that needs healing.

Ruby Sales is a theologian, activist, and child of the Civil Rights movement. In her work with individuals and communities, she leads with the question: Where does it hurt? Because we can only start to ask: How will we heal? when we see and notice and understand the hurt.

Healing can take many different forms. Sometimes healing is cure; the pain goes away and all is restored.

"We all have a lot of cuts and hurts."

Sometimes healing involves other changes of conditions or changes of resistance. Something we weren't looking for gets better or grows. We find new peace with the way things fall apart.

In the many forms that healing can come, Jesus calls us all to be healed and to become healers. This week we step forward into greater healing by asking: where does it hurt? as we read passages that explore themes related to the healing we seek.

We'll look at five short passages from John that call us to different aspects of the healing journey. We'll learn and think about different sides of personal and civic healing. And each day, we'll take a few quiet minutes with pen and journal in hand, asking the simple but powerful question: Where does it hurt? We'll write down whatever comes to mind and close with a simple prayer for God's healing for us all.



THE PRACTICE Journal

Where does it hurt? What healing can be found?

Our prayer practice for the fifth week of Lent is noticing the hurt and seeking God for healing. There is a daily practice we encourage and a bonus one time practice near the end of the week we invite you to try if you have some extra time.

Journal writing is a way of doing what the psalms encourage when they invite us to “pour out your heart before God” (Psalm 62:8). It’s a way of practicing what the psalmist does when praying to God, “Search me, O God, and know my heart” (Psalm 139:23) It’s free, unedited writing for no audience but ourselves and God. As we write out whatever is on our mind our heart, it helps get it out of our insides so that we can notice it and it helps us engage our inner thoughts and feelings with God, so that like the psalmist, we can know “God is refuge” (Psalm 62:8) and experience God leading “us in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:24)



Each day this week, you can use the space in the guide - or in another journal if you have one - to answer the question: Where does it hurt? Whatever comes to mind, whatever hurt inside you, inside someone else you know, or in the larger world around you, just write down whatever hurt comes to mind and whatever thoughts and feelings you have about that hurt.

Then pray to God: Living God, please heal this hurt. And ask God: is there any way I can participate in your healing today?

Take a quiet moment with these two prayers and notice whatever comes to mind.

At the end of this week, if you have a little more time, use your journal again and take a walk and ask God what hurt you might particularly want to help heal in some way. What inside you, or what relationship, or what problem in your community, would you like to help mend and heal, with the help of God? We'll work with that hope in our final week.

DAY 1

THE HEALING WATERS

JOHN 5:5-7

One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.”

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Jesus encounters someone who has been unwell for decades, just waiting for someone to help him into a pool purported to possess healing powers. We may think of those of us who have been waiting for the perfect diet or perfect doctor, the perfect relationship, or even the perfect church or spiritual experience that will make us well.
- Instead, Jesus asks this person what he wants. Does he want to be made well? Jesus never blames people for their problems and we shouldn't either - more on that tomorrow. But here I think Jesus acknowledges that we sometimes develop a kind of attachment to what in us is most unwell. Sometimes we need to ask if we want to be, if we are ready for more healing.
- This man isn't sure, we see, but Jesus helps him anyway. Today as we ask: where does it hurt?, we might also imagine Jesus compassionately asking us: Do you want to be made well?

JOURNALING

NOTICE THE HURT INSIDE YOU, SOMEONE ELSE, OR THE WORLD

ask |

WHERE DOES IT HURT?
DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?

prayer |

LIVING GOD, PLEASE HEAL THIS HURT.
HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN YOUR HEALING TODAY?

"Where does it hurt? It's a question we scarcely know how to ask in public life now."

RUBY SALES

WEEK 5



DAY 2

THE HEALING WATERS

JOHN 9:1-3

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Jesus confronts one of the oldest religious lies - that people get what they deserve. Sometimes this is true, of course, but not always.
- This line about God’s works being revealed - some people read it as saying God made this man blind so that God could heal him and get people to worship God. I don’t agree. That sounds manipulative and cruel, and I don’t believe God is like this. Instead, I think this speaks to God’s redemptive power. God creates purpose in this man’s blindness.
- In this case, the purpose is a return of sight. We know that’s not always true. It’s a beautiful thing when someone’s sickness or disability is improved. It’s also a beautiful thing when someone lives with grace and goodness and courage while sick or disabled. Sometimes healing is a change of our condition. Sometimes healing is a change of our resistance.

JOURNALING

NOTICE THE HURT INSIDE YOU, SOMEONE ELSE, OR THE WORLD

ask |

WHERE DOES IT HURT?
DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?

prayer |

LIVING GOD, PLEASE HEAL THIS HURT.
HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN YOUR HEALING TODAY?

"I think that one of the things that theologies must have is hindsight, insight, and foresight. That is complete sight. And I think that fragmentation really shatters that sight, and it says that it's not an "I" sight, it's a "we" sight."

RUBY SALES

WEEK 5

DAY 3

THE HEALING WATERS

JOHN 9:5-7

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Water is a means of healing here, both the municipal water source of the city and also Jesus’ own saliva. Two insights on the saliva bit: some ancients believed that saliva had healing properties, so maybe Jesus was working through a means that both of them recognized as somewhat medicinal - like alternative medicine. And some think Jesus is working through what we find disgusting. (Would you let someone rub their spit in your eyes?!?) If this is the case, then Jesus makes the point that God finds no part of us disgusting, that God is with and works through all parts of us and all people and things.
- Healing is always a process. God does some things, and we do other things. That’s always true.
- This whole chapter is full of ironic insights on sight and blindness and on light and darkness. The upshot of it all is that Jesus brings truth and clarity and insight where those things are lacking. Seeing the truth has its own healing qualities, always. Jesus after all did say, “The truth will set you free.”

"Healing is always a process."

JOURNALING

NOTICE THE HURT INSIDE YOU, SOMEONE ELSE, OR THE WORLD

ask |

WHERE DOES IT HURT?
DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?

prayer |

LIVING GOD, PLEASE HEAL THIS HURT.
HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN YOUR HEALING TODAY?

*"The question before you, is do you want to be healed?
Do you want to become whole and live into all of your identities? Do you want to
join a long line of generations of people who believed in the promise...."*

RUBY SALES

WEEK 5

DIGITAL



mkoby



In our own ways
we all break.
it is okay
to hold your heart outside of your body
for days.
months.
years.
at a time.

- heal

Nayyirah Waheed, Salt (2013)

A vibrant blue watercolor background with various shades of blue and white, creating a textured, organic pattern.

DAY 4

THE HEALING WATERS

ISAIAH 55:1-3A

**All of you who are thirsty, come to the water!
Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat!
Without money, at no cost, buy wine and milk!
Why spend money for what isn't food,
and your earnings for what doesn't satisfy?
Listen carefully to me and eat what is good;
enjoy the richest of feasts.
Listen and come to me;
listen, and you will live.**

POINTS OF INTEREST

- I heard these lyrics in a cheezy, 70s era Christian folk song when I was a kid. But you know what that did for me? Gave me this baseline belief that God wants what is best for me, that the most important things in life money can't buy, and that if any form or religion or anything else leaves me ashamed or shut down or dead inside, then it's not from God.
- Sometimes healing comes when we let go of a food or a habit or an attitude that doesn't do us or anyone else any good, trading it in for "what is good", for what satisfies, for what brings more life.
- The "you" in these verses (and in most of the Bible, to be honest) isn't singular, it's plural. These words are written to a people, not a person. What does it mean for a family, for a community, for an organization like a workplace, even for a whole ethnic group or country to stop wasting money on things that don't satisfy and to choose justice and joy and love and all the other ways of God that bring life to us all?

JOURNALING

NOTICE THE HURT INSIDE YOU, SOMEONE ELSE, OR THE WORLD

ask |

WHERE DOES IT HURT?
DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?

prayer |

LIVING GOD, PLEASE HEAL THIS HURT.
HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN YOUR HEALING TODAY?

*"This whole business of demonization, I've been deeply concerned about it,
because it does not locate the good in people. It gives up on people. "*

RUBY SALES

WEEK 5



DAY 5

THE HEALING WATERS

ISAIAH 58:9B-12

**If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.**

**The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.**

**Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.**

POINTS OF INTEREST

- We left off yesterday noticing that Isaiah is searching not just for personal wellness, but for healing and wholeness for a whole society. This chapter makes that yearning very explicit. Just societies are whole societies. What's best for those who are hungry, afflicted, and otherwise suffering is best for all of us. We rise and fall together.
- Do you want to be satisfied, strong, resilient, and hopeful at all times, in all seasons? Fun fact: the prophets show us the way. They tell us to lighten the load for everyone in our society who is suffering most and to do our part in making our world a kinder, gentler, more opportunity-filled place to live, especially for the people with the fewest resources. This is our path toward security and a legacy. Healers experience healing.
- Civic healing is required for personal healing. We're all in it together. The gospel is personal, and it is also economic, social, and political.

JOURNALING

NOTICE THE HURT INSIDE YOU, SOMEONE ELSE, OR THE WORLD

ask |

WHERE DOES IT HURT?
DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?

prayer |

LIVING GOD, PLEASE HEAL THIS HURT.
HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN YOUR HEALING TODAY?

*"Ordinary people when working together have the power
to break the backs of important empires.
And the empire, when people are united, is never
stronger than the will of the people."*

RUBY SALES

WEEK 5



MURAL

Rise
by Silvia López Chavez, Dominican-American artist
218 Marginal St, Boston ICA Watershed
@silviaopezchavez

I used to, in disasters
try to account
for everyone I loved

Are we okay?
Let us be okay

But now I love
too many people
and the world

Is full of disasters
so I pray

By opening my heart wide
letting it fill with pain and love
and emptying it into the sea
to be bourne again
on the tide

POETRY

by Jessica Kantrowitz
Blessings for the Long Night:
Poems and Meditations to Help
You through Depression



SHE SAW HIM DISAPPEAR BY THE RIVER,
THEY ASKED HER TO TELL WHAT HAPPENED,
ONLY TO DISCOUNT HER MEMORY.

"The two containers are reminders of the way history is held and shaped, yet the water that flows from each is constant, undifferentiated, a sign of transcendent possibility, a reminder that it is always possible to transform the self, to remake history. The water flows like a blessing."

bell hooks

"Art on My Mind: Visual Politics" (110)

Waterbearer
Lorna Simpson (American, b. 1960)
Gelatin silver print with vinyl lettering
59 × 80 × 2¼ in, 1986