

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Psalm 97

This week, we are considering Christ's model of meditation and reflection on the Father. He often spent time in quiet spaces despite facing the expectations of thousands who wanted something from him. His ministry was full and fruitful, and yet, he often pursued solitude in lonely spaces to commune with the Father.

I encourage you to read through some of his contemplative practices in the temptation narratives (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, Mark 1:12-13), in his time in Gethsemane before his arrest (Matthew 26:36-46), and in the prayers he offered before the Father as he anticipated his death (John 17). Each gives us insight into the practices of Christ as he considered and enriched his relationship with the Father.

This week, instead of giving you my own insight into meditation and contemplation, I would like to encourage you into a practice of meditation and contemplation. Some may be more expert at the practice than I. Continue your good work in the week ahead. Some may occasionally contemplate the God we serve but have not made it a daily discipline. Some have no idea what it means to do this sort of spiritual work. I hope to bless each of you in the space you find yourself in.

Caution: Some who are reading this are immediately closing this email or turning off the audio file. I cannot encourage you strongly enough to at least try to enter a practice of meditation. It's a command of scripture (from Psalm 1) and a really good idea for your spiritual and mental flourishing. Please. Try it for one week. Give the Spirit an opportunity to meet you in a new space and teach you more of his great love for you!

To do this work of meditation, we will enter an ancient church practice called "Lectio Divina" or "Divine Reading". For millennia, the church has used this practice to call believers to still themselves before God's word, and instead of actively pursuing what we want from scripture, allowing ourselves to be shaped by the Spirit's agenda as we meditate on his word. We give space for Christ to speak as "the Word" into us while we passively and gratefully receive what it is he gives to us.

To begin, give yourself about 20 minutes to enter this discipline. If you do your devotions with your spouse, I encourage you to observe the practice individually and only interact upon completion of that 20-minute (or more if the Spirit wills it!) space of meditation. Find a space where you can sit comfortably. You can be outside or inside. You can be anywhere although a busy space filled with people will take considerably more mental work on your part. Have some paper to write on hand with your Bible and take thirty seconds to breathe yourself into a more relaxed state; slow, deep breaths into your stomach.

Pray this simple prayer several times through: "Holy Spirit come. Speak to my heart through your words. Still my mind and heart to all else save your truth. I am willing to receive what you offer. Give me what it is you know I need today. I am willing. Fill me with your presence."

Now, read Psalm 97. It's better if you listen to another read it (An audio Bible is available on our church app and almost all Bible apps have this feature. You can also listen to the KJV and NIV for free online at Biblica.com. A cool English guy reads it!).

As you slowly move through the text, close your eyes and listen to the words as they come. After the reading is complete, sit for a minute in what the text says. If there is an image that comes to you from the text, center your thoughts on it and slow your breathing as you examine the image. Breathe slowly into what you see in your mind for a couple of minutes. After some time, write down what you see. You may even want to draw a picture of what the Spirit has given you.

Now listen to the text again. (Your app may be able to slow the reading of the text which can be helpful. 0.8 speed is about the slowest you can go before the voice begins to sound disjointed.) Again, let your mind be open to what you hear. Perhaps you will return to the first image. Perhaps a new image comes. Perhaps something seemingly disconnected to the text is brought to mind. Maybe the Spirit is speaking through that new image. Keep listening to the text but allow your mind to be open to what the Spirit is giving in the word. Again, breathe into what you see in your mind. Put pen to paper in words or images what the Spirit has shown you.

Again, listen to the text (going back to the text is the constant practice! We allow God's word to shape our minds and not the other way around!). As you listen, be open to what the Spirit is speaking through the word. Breathe out "not my will", breathe in "but yours be done oh Lord." After this final reading give yourself several moments with eyes closed and the images the Spirit has given you in your thoughts. When you are comfortable, write down what words the Spirit has spoken to you. If you have no words, that's okay. Sometimes the Spirit simply meets us in this space. Having a divine meeting with God everyday sounds like the best appointment we could possibly have.

As you close your time of meditation, spend a couple of minutes writing a prayer out of this meditation on this text. This is his word. He has shown himself to you! Allow your prayer to be one of thanksgiving for what he has given you.

Let's together discover what our obedience to the word in meditation does for each one of this week!

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his smile towards you and give you his peace.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I love you all. Blessings.

Feel free to share this devotion with others.