

From Dust to Breath: A 5-Day Lenten Devotional

Day 1: Beloved in the Waters

Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Devotional: Jesus didn't need baptism for repentance, yet he waded into the Jordan alongside sinners. In that moment of radical solidarity, God declared, "This is my beloved Son." Notice where divine affirmation comes—not in separation from humanity, but in complete identification with it. You don't earn God's love by transcending your limitations or perfecting yourself. God names you beloved precisely in your humanity, in your need, in the messy waters of ordinary life. Today, resist the urge to prove your worthiness. Instead, hear what God already declares over you: You are my beloved. Let that truth sink deeper than any achievement or failure ever could.

Day 2: The Valley Work of Love

Reading: Micah 6:6-8

Devotional: Peter wanted to build monuments on the mountaintop, but Jesus led the disciples back down to the valley where a desperate father waited. The spectacular moment wasn't the destination—it was fuel for the journey. God doesn't call us to chase glory or document extraordinary experiences. He calls us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly in the ordinary places. The valley is where love actually happens—in patient conversations, repeated forgiveness, faithful presence. What valley work is God calling you to today? What relationship needs your attention? What act of mercy awaits? The mountaintop gave the disciples courage for descent. Let God's affirmation of you empower the humble, hidden work of love.

Day 3: Listen to Him

Reading: Mark 9:2-9

Devotional: "Listen to him." God interrupts Peter's tent-building with this simple command. Not "memorialize this" or "capture this," but listen. In our documenting, posting, preserving culture, we've forgotten the art of listening—especially to the

hard things Jesus teaches. Just before the Transfiguration, Jesus spoke of suffering and death. The disciples wanted to reject that message, to build something glorious instead. But God says: Listen to him, even about this. Even about limitation. Even about the cross. What is Jesus saying to you that you've been trying to talk over, explain away, or escape? Today, practice listening without immediately responding, fixing, or filtering. Let his words—even the uncomfortable ones—settle into your heart.

Day 4: Glory in Limitation

Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Devotional: We spend enormous energy trying to transcend our limitations—aging, weakness, mortality itself. But the Transfiguration reveals something radical: God declares Jesus beloved precisely when he's most intertwined with human vulnerability. At baptism, joining us in need. On the mountain, teaching about death. On the cross, entering our ultimate limitation. Belovedness isn't achieved by overcoming your humanity; it's declared within it. Paul discovered that God's power is perfected in weakness. What limitation are you fighting today? What if it's not an obstacle to God's love but the very place where you encounter it most deeply? Your mortality, your messy embodiment, your ordinary days—these aren't barriers to belovedness. They're where it lives.

Day 5: Embodying Belovedness

Reading: Matthew 5:13-16

Devotional: Salt and light don't transcend their environment—they enter it, transform it from within. Jesus didn't stay on the mountaintop in radiant glory. He descended to heal, teach, forgive, and ultimately die. He embodied belovedness in the valley. This is your calling too: not to escape into spiritual experiences, but to carry divine affirmation into ordinary life. To be salt that preserves and flavors. To be light that illuminates darkness. Not through spectacular displays, but through consistent presence, humble service, patient love. How will you wear your identity as God's beloved today? What relationship needs your salty preservation? What darkness needs your gentle light? The glory you witnessed—in worship, prayer, or moments of transcendence—isn't meant to be captured. It's meant to be carried down the mountain and given away.