

# Good Gifts for the Road

*prepared by Sojo dove*

## Welcome

Church at the Well has spent this Lenten season with the sermon series “Tell Me Something Good: Grounding Ourselves in the Good News.” We’ve lingered near the [far edges of fields](#), the [faces we might pass](#) without really seeing, and the [gifts that sustain](#) both bodies and souls.

The following reflection by Howard Thurman offers another small scene along a desert roadside, where someone tends a light, a jar of water, and a bit of fruit for whoever might come.

 *Before we begin, take a slow breath in... and a long breath out. Continue with as many easy breaths as you want, feeling all four corners of your feet on the ground and your body settling into the present moment.*

## Howard Thurman’s *Desert Dweller*

In this excerpt from his book, *Meditations of the Heart*, Howard Thurman describes a desert dweller:

“He has lived in the desert so long that all of its moods have long since become a part of the daily rhythms of his life. But it is not that fact that is of crucial importance. For many years, it has been his custom to leave a lighted lantern by the roadside at night to cheer the weary traveler. Beside the lantern, there is a note which gives detailed directions as to where his cottage may be found so that if there is distress or need, the stranger may find help. It is a very simple gesture full of beauty and wholeness. To him, it is not important who the stranger may be, it is not important how many people pass in the night and go on their way. The important thing is that the lantern burns every night and every night the note is there, ‘just in case.’”

- Thurman, H. (2022). *Meditations of the Heart* (p. 62). Beacon Press.

Thurman then recalls walking along a road outside Rangoon, where he noticed at intervals a roadside stone with a crock of water and, at times, fruit set out by Buddhist priests to comfort and bless any passerby—a kind of spiritual greeting to the stranger. As a traveler from another part of the world, speaking a different language and practicing another faith, Thurman was still welcomed by this quiet generosity. What mattered most was simply that he was walking along the road; who he was and what his mission might be, faded into the background.

 *Inhale: Lord, open Your Word to my heart.*

 *Exhale: Lord, open my heart to Your Word.*

## Reflection Prompts

As you linger with this roadside scene this Lent, imagine Isaiah standing nearby, speaking of light that breaks forth, parched places becoming like watered gardens, and streets restored for people to walk in. Hear the prophet's words in Isaiah 58:6–12 as an invitation to consider the kind of fast God desires.

 As you picture the lantern by the roadside, notice where a small light (Isaiah 58:8) already burns in or around your own life—some quiet way you are, or long to be, a presence along the road for others.

 Let the 'jar of cool water' and the promise of a 'watered garden' (Isaiah 58:11) rest in you. Recall a time when you have been refreshed on your own road, and notice any simple ways you feel drawn to offer that kind of refreshment to someone else.



Gently name the ‘roadsides’ or ‘streets’ in your world—literal or figurative—where you sense a longing for more welcome, safety, or rest (Isaiah 58:12). Hold those places before God without needing to solve them.



Howard Thurman ended his meditation with these searching questions:

*“In your own way, do you keep a lantern burning by the roadside with a note saying where you may be found, ‘just in case’? Do you place a jar of cool water and a bit of fruit under a tree at the road’s turning, to help the needy traveler? God knows the answer and so do you!”*

As you sit with these questions, simply notice what—if anything—stirs in you.

## **Closing Reflection & Prayer**

*However these images and questions land for you today, may you rest first in the truth that God has kept a lantern lit and a jar of water waiting for you.*

Let us pray:

O Merciful One, whose righteousness goes before us,  
and whose glory has our backs,  
who hears and faithfully responds to our calls—  
illuminate our way.

All-knowing God, who strengthens our frames and waters our gardens well,  
break our yokes and open our hands,  
that the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable in Your sight.  
In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.