

OCTOBER 2024

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*FOUR WEEK  
DEVOTIONAL GUIDE*



UNIVERSITY  
UNITED  
METHODIST  
CHURCH

CLARITY **Year Three**  
+ *courage*

## ABOUT THE CREATORS

### *REV. LISLE GWYNN GARRITY*

FOUNDER | CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF A SANCTIFIED ART (SA)

Lisle Gwynn Garrity (*she/her*) is a Pastorist (*pastor + artist*), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. She founded A Sanctified Art with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.

### *REV. LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN*

DIRECTOR OF BRANDING | FOUNDING CREATIVE PARTNER OF SA

Lauren (*she/her*) is an artist, graphic designer, and theologian. She uses paint, metallic inks, and apple pencil to image the layered complexity she experiences in scripture texts. She also helps faith communities share their vibrant stories through branding & design services.

### *HANNAH GARRITY* FOUNDING CREATIVE PARTNER OF SA

Hannah (*she/her*) is an artist and an athlete, a daughter and a mother, a facilitator and a producer, a leader and a teammate. She is an art teacher at a middle school in Richmond, VA, a Sunday school visual choir facilitator at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA, an art in worship workshop leader wherever she is called, and a liturgical installation artist at the Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC.

### *REV. SARAH ARE* FOUNDING CREATIVE PARTNER OF SA

Sarah Are (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities.

### *REV. MIEKE VANDERSALL* OWNER & PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT OF VANDERSALL COLLECTIVE (VC)

With over 15 years of executive leadership experience in the religious nonprofit arena, Mieke (*she/her*) is the Founding Pastor of Not So Churchy, a progressive, arts-based, queer-led, new worshipping community in NYC.

### *ERIN WEBER-JOHNSON* SENIOR CONSULTANT AT VC

A published author and speaker, Erin (*she/her*) roots her stewardship work in practical theology. In addition to being a published writer, Erin facilitates national and regional workshops, preaches in congregations across denominations, provides plenaries and workshops at conferences, and leads church leadership retreats. She is based out of St. Paul, MN.

We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. Perhaps we are living from a story of fear or shame or guilt. Or a story that our actions won't have an impact. Or a story that we don't have enough. Where might God be speaking a new narrative into the limited ones we have told ourselves?

Often, to speak of money is to invite tension into the room. We so quickly want to avoid it. But we can reframe this. Money and possessions are one of the most common topics in scripture, and Jesus talked about money more than faith and prayer. Our money story, therefore, is a spiritual story.

We invite you to complete this journal at the pace that suits you. You may wish to ponder the reflections and prompts individually or with others. We have designed this journal to be used as a personal devotional or as the curriculum for a group study series.

The best stories captivate and transform us—they change how we live. This stewardship season, we invite you to remember, release, reimagine, and restore your money stories so that we can write the one God is begging us to live into.

*Artfully yours,*

**The Sanctified Art Creative Team**

Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Sarah Are

Hannah Garrity

Lauren Wright Pittman

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## A MONEY STORY

### *Nickels*

My grandfather pressed a nickel into my hand—  
One of those small silver circles  
That countries are built on  
And people live and die for.  
I cupped my eight-year-old palm around it  
As if that gift could become a part of me.  
And once I had blessed it,  
And once I had tossed it,  
And once wishes had been made on heads and tails,  
It was time to let it go.

I laid that cool silver circle  
That countries are built on  
And people live and die for  
On the railroad tracks.  
And after the train passed,  
I marveled at how something so small  
Could endure so much  
And still be here at all.  
But I guess you could say the same for me.

*Poem by Sarah Are*

## WRITING YOUR MONEY STORY



Use the following prompts to discern and record your money story. Throughout this exercise, notice what emotions emerge for you along the way. Take your time. Give yourself grace. Trust that your money story is valuable and redeemable. In completing this writing exercise, we hope you gain clarity, seek healing, and release what has been suppressed or hidden away. Our narratives and beliefs shape our actions. Ultimately, we hope this exercise inspires you to give more faithfully of yourself and your resources to bring forth God's money story of liberation and healing for all.

As you reflect on the series of questions for each prompt, offer any words, phrases, or memories that come to mind for you. Respond with full sentences, bullet points, doodles, or whatever feels most comfortable for you to capture your memories and ideas. Record your responses to the prompts in your personal journal, or on additional sheets of paper.

For each category, first reflect on the past. Consider your childhood, family of origin, adolescence, or any time in your early life that was formative in shaping you into who you are today. Then, move to the present. How has the past informed your perceptions and practices now? What have you changed or left behind? What scars do you hold? What gifts do you carry with you into your life now?

### *BEGIN WITH PRAYER*

Giving and loving God,

I am made of stories—

stories of heartbreak and triumph,

stories of love and tragedy,

stories of families who belong and families who break,

stories of loose ends and new beginnings.

I have absorbed stories that live in me like an internal compass,

and many that I do not wish to carry at all.

But your story remains steadfast: I am loved. I am enough. There is enough for all.

*Enough. Enough. Enough.*

May this become my constant refrain.

May I believe this is who I am.

May I live trusting your holy design.

*Enough. Enough. Enough.*

Amen.

## SETTING

**Look to the past:** Growing up, how would you describe your socioeconomic status or position?<sup>1</sup> What was the economic environment of your neighborhood, your school, your local community (*city, town, region*)? How did this economic setting shape your perceptions and beliefs about money?

**Reflect on the present:** What words would you use to describe your socioeconomic status or position now? How would you describe the economic environment of your current neighborhood and local community (*city, town, region*)? How does your current economic setting inform your money story now?

## CHARACTERS

**Look to the past:** Throughout your childhood and formative years, who were the leading characters of your money story? Who taught you—directly or indirectly—about finances and practices of giving? What did you learn or absorb from them? Who are the protagonists and antagonists of your money story—who gave you positive and healthy perceptions of money and who negatively impacted your money narrative?

**Reflect on the present:** Who are the leading characters of your money story now? Who do you look to as models, guides, or experts? Who in your community or in your faith tradition inspires you to give of your gifts and resources?

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<sup>1</sup> This question recognizes the difficult reality that we operate in hierarchies of power and wealth. The labels we use to categorize economic “status” are labels given to us externally, labels that do not determine our worth or belovedness. While it can be helpful to discern how these worldly labels have impacted us, these are not the labels God gives us. As you reflect, you may write down labels you have avoided or carried like wounds. Where you write those labels, in the margins also write the names God gives you instead (ex. “beloved,” “loved,” “enough,” “redeemed”).

## *PLOT*

**Look to the past:** What are the key events or major turning points in your money story? How would you trace the narrative arc of your relationship with money throughout your life?

**Reflect on the present:** Name any recent events that are impacting your money story now. What events, challenges, or changes are impacting your financial behaviors and giving practices right now?

## *CONFLICT*

**Look to the past:** What financial challenges or limitations have you faced? Where is there tension or wrestling in your money story? Where has there been conflict between characters?

**Reflect on the present:** What money challenges do you wish to overcome and heal from? What habits do you want to retrain? Name any fears, baggage, scars, limiting beliefs, or shame you wish to release.



## *TONE*

**Look to the past:** Throughout your childhood and formative years, describe the emotional tone of your perceptions of money. Perhaps your attitude toward money has changed throughout your life. Trace how the tone has fluctuated or shifted with the major turning points of your money story.

**Reflect on the present:** How would you describe the overall tone of your money story now? How would you describe your current attitude toward money?

## *THEME*

Take a few moments to look over your notes. Pay attention to any patterns or motifs. Trace any overarching themes. Then, in one to three sentences, write the main takeaway or idea of your money story. Like a thesis statement, this tries to summarize the overriding philosophy or belief within your money story. If you want structure for your theme statement, you might begin your sentences with the following phrases, filling in the blanks however you see fit:

“I believe money \_\_\_\_\_”

“I use money \_\_\_\_\_”

“I give money \_\_\_\_\_”

## REFLECTING ON YOUR MONEY STORY



1. Go through your notes and circle the parts of your money story that feel positive, healthy, and worth holding onto. How do these areas of your money story inspire your giving practices? How might they support others in their own stewardship practices? How do these areas help you practice financial wellness in your job, your family, your church?
  
2. Go through your notes and write a star by the parts of your money story that hold tension or heaviness. How might you work to redeem and rewrite these areas of your money story? Name any faith practices or actions that might help you heal.
  
3. Return to the “*theme*” section of your money story. Is this the money story you want to embody moving forward? What is missing that you wish to include in your story as it continues to unfold? In the space below, add onto or rewrite your money story with the one you want to live into.

## *IMAGINING GOD'S MONEY STORY*



Now imagine and write God's money story. Recall scriptures where Jesus teaches about money, power, and possessions. What characters or passages in the bible teach us about faithful stewardship? What is the overall theme of God's money story? In the space below, write (*in a series of statements or a few short sentences*) what you imagine is God's money story.

As you walk through the weekly scriptures, art, poetry, and prompts that follow, keep in mind your money story and God's money story. As you complete the journal, ask yourself:

**How is my money story changing or evolving?**

**What am I learning about God's money story?**



REMEMBER

*Not Too Many Times*

My great-grandfather would  
come home from work  
To find his love at the  
kitchen sink—  
Scrubbing potatoes or freeing  
the corn,  
Holy ordinary types of things.

And he would slide,  
Arms around waist,  
To draw near enough  
To ask her the phrase,  
“My dear,  
Have I told you today?”

“Have I told you today that  
I love you?”

...

Day after day  
It was always the same,  
Because some things  
You can't *not* say.  
So she would smile  
And with heartbeat to spine,  
She would reply,  
“Not too many times.”

And it seems to me  
That he must have known  
That certain truths  
Must be told  
Over and over  
And over again  
So that love has a chance  
To slowly sink in.

And it seems to me  
That she must have known

That stories of love  
Cannot be told  
Too many times.  
So tell me again  
Of the love that serves  
As beginning and end.

I guess what I'm trying to say  
Is that we are forgetful people  
most days.

We remember the melody but  
forget the words.

We remember the past but forget  
the hurt.

We remember the face but forget  
the name.

We remember who God is but  
forget that God stays.

So when Jesus said,  
“Do this in remembrance of me,”  
Maybe he was standing with us  
at the sink

Saying to us, “Have I told  
you today?”

For some things you can't *not* say.

So tell me that story  
And tell me again  
Until my whole world  
Is caught up in  
A love that lasts  
And a God that saves.

And if you ask,  
I will say,  
“Not too many times.”

*Poem by Sarah Are*

## *JOURNALING PROMPTS* | Remembering

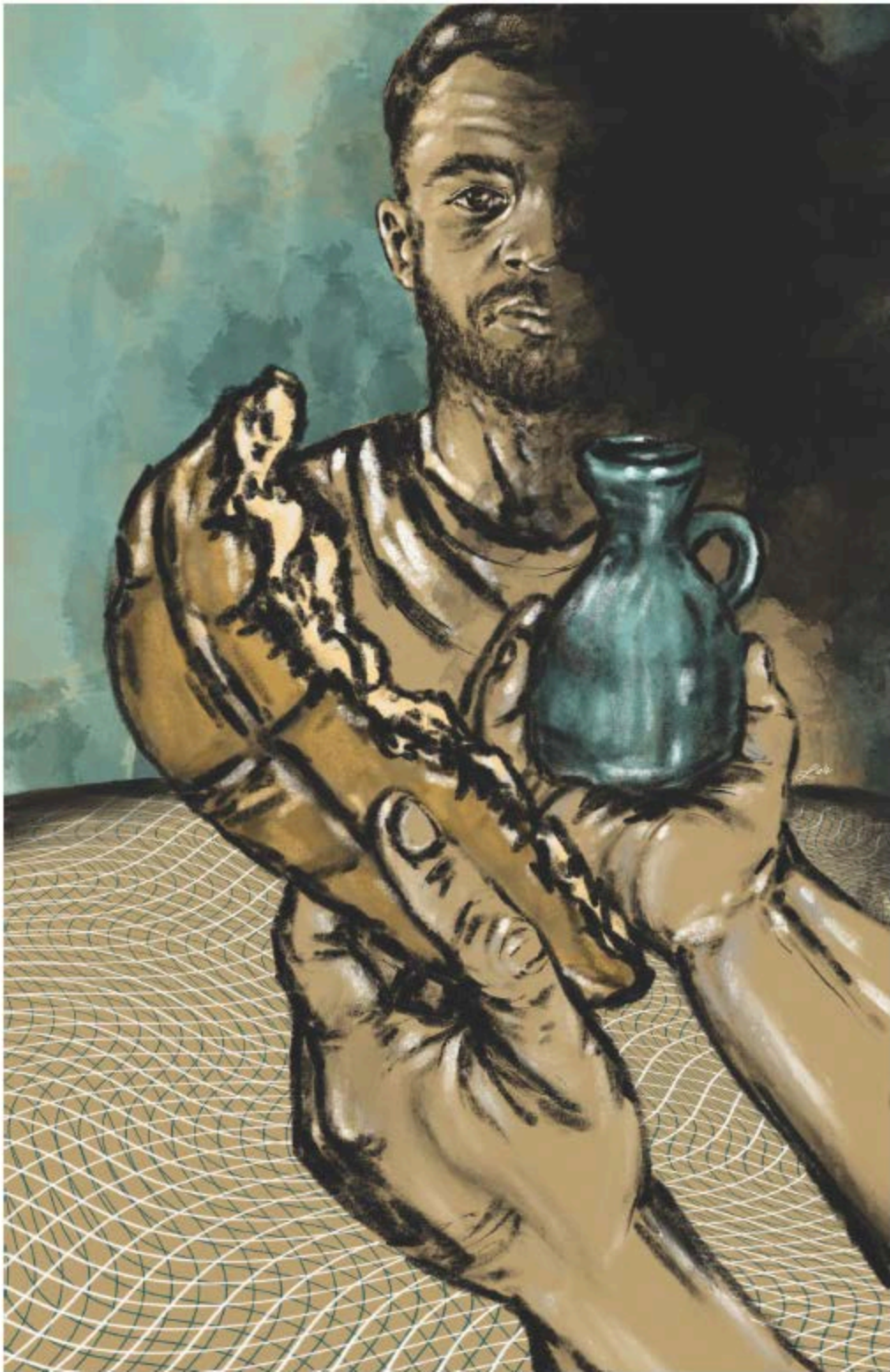
*Record your responses to the following prompts in your personal journal, or on additional sheets of paper.*



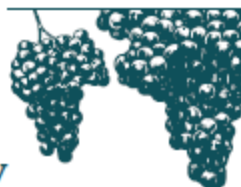
- Write down your first memory of money as a child.  
*Ask yourself: What did I learn from this? How did I respond?  
How do I act now that hearkens back to this learning?*
- Then write down your first memory of money in the Church. Ask yourself the same questions.
- When do we talk about money in the Church?  
For what purpose? What scripture readings are used?
- When are we silent about money in the Church?  
What role has silence played? What are the particular patterns in the Church that you attend or lead?

As you write, bring these memories and habits to consciousness. Remember that Jesus takes all of our memories—the ways money has been used to control and the ways money has been used to liberate—and holds a new vision for us to behold: the kingdom of God. Here there is a new economy.

Remember also that Jesus takes bread and wine. He divides it up and gives a bit to everyone—to be fed, to have a taste of the new economy, to share that which is God's in the first place.



*Re-member Me* | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



*READ* | Luke 22:1-23

*FROM THE ARTIST* | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Peter and John go to prepare the Passover meal in the home of a generous stranger. Meanwhile, Judas satiates the desires of the chief priests and legal experts by cutting a deal with them. Many of us quickly condemn Judas' betrayal as cowardly and weak. But we are privileged to know the end of this story, which makes judgment more enticing than empathy.

Judas did not know exactly how this narrative would play out. He knew what Jesus had told them about their fate, painting a vision of doom and terror: the temple demolished, nations at war, food shortages, epidemics, harassment and torture from the authorities, betrayal by loved ones, hatred from strangers, possible execution by the state (*Luke 21:5-19*). With the chief priests on the hunt and Jesus' disruptive death on the horizon, things were escalating quickly. Judas had to act fast.

In the face of so much uncertainty and fear for the future, how might you behave? Judas wants the nightmare to end. He wants security, assurance, quick relief. He wants to go back to how things used to be. And so, evil enters into Judas' story like ink spilled across the page.

But Jesus doesn't let Judas' story end here. Instead, he welcomes him to the table—a table where fear and doubt and difference have a place too. He offers him a meal where brokenness just makes more to pass around. He pours into a common cup that promises a new way forward.

Scarcity and fear and conflict will always threaten to dismember our story. But can we remember that God has a greater story to tell—a story that re-members us and makes us whole?

### *PROMPTS FOR VISUAL MEDITATION*

Center yourself by taking a deep breath and relaxing your body as best you can. Spend a few moments in quiet, following the prompts below for a time of visual meditation.

Flip back to the previous page and rest your eyes on the art. Simply read the image, observing the colors, shapes, composition and textures.

Then, take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes immediately drawn to? What parts of the image did you quickly brush by or overlook?

Lastly, use your imagination. If you could put yourself in the image, where would you be and why? How would you interact with what surrounds you?



*PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION* | Luke 22:1-23



- Why are the chief priests and legal experts trying to put Jesus to death? What economic systems was he challenging? Why was he considered a threat?
  
- How do you relate to Judas' money story? Do you see yourself in his story or do you resonate more with other characters in this text?
  
- How would you describe the kingdom of God? How are resources shared in the kingdom of God?
  
- How might we share resources in our world today to bring forth the kingdom of God? How might we remember Jesus every time we divide and share?



*Enough* | Hannah Garrity



*READ* | Exodus 16:1-18

*FROM THE ARTIST* | Hannah Garrity

We have enough... I have been contemplating this phrase for the last two years. We recently moved. In the process, we downsized. How could so many things that I remembered paying money for now become so irrelevant that I would choose to put them in the trash? My Honda Accord had to hold our bags, the inflatable bed, the two children, and me. Sitting on my front stoop, I slowly realized that I had to send everything else to the dump. I had two hours.

1-800-GOT-JUNK was scheduled out for days, so was College Hunks Moving Junk. Glen from Stevens City was available. For \$50/load, he would take everything left in the house in the back of his blue pickup. Four loads. I had always contributed one trash can per week to the landfill. This was different. It was jarring. I began to feel lighter, but heavier at the same time. Why had I purchased all of these things? Enough is better than more, more, more.

In this painting, I have overlaid my empty hand with sets of circles. The guilloché-style patterning is used by treasuries all over the world to secure paper currency by making it too intricate to counterfeit. Here, guilloché circles represent my deeply personal relationship with the money that supports our lives. Some money falls past my hand, some into my hand. Moses advises the people: take only what you need, one omer each. In this piece, the idea of enough money is layered with the idea of enough sustenance through manna. The manna is portrayed by another set of circles, reminiscent of the wafers that are used in some traditions as Communion bread. Enough. Thank you, God, for providing enough, that I would take what I need.

### *PROMPTS FOR VISUAL MEDITATION*

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*PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION* | Exodus 16:1-18



- In your own life, when have you felt like the Israelites, wandering and doubting you would have enough?
  
- How do you discern what is enough? What does enough money, food, time and resources look like for you? Can you determine when you have too much or too little?
  
- Identify a time in your life that felt like receiving manna—perhaps this was an unexpected financial gift, nourishing time spent with those you love, or a beautiful meal shared with family. What did it feel like to receive this? How do manna moments like this impact your faith and your stewardship practices?

*PRAY* God, author of salvation, write a story of money in my heart that remembers your faithfulness from generation to generation.

RELEASE

*But First*

I want to practice being free.  
I want to unstitch my heart  
From the edge of my sleeve  
So that I can give it a life of its own—  
A real chance to love and be known.

I want to practice opening  
My mind, my doors, and window panes,  
Anything with a hinge, everything with a frame,  
Until the breeze carries through—  
A new point of reference, truth, and you.

I want to practice a holy escape,  
Losing track of my minutes that turn into days  
Because the only time that matters now  
Is time with you and this golden hour.

I want to practice release,  
Removing the stones that weigh down my wings—  
Stones of fear, shame, and grief,  
Stones that build walls between you and me.

I want to do all of these things—  
Be untamed and wild, open and free,  
The first to give and the last to hold tight,  
Because gratitude and clenched fists never felt right.

And I am just starting to see  
That this life is a river, a holy stream.  
And if life is a river then God is the sky,  
Touching everything at once and inviting us to try  
Letting go of the raft, to float on our backs,  
So that we and God can be eye to eye—  
A lifetime of baptism and nothing but sky.  
But first, you have to release.

*Poem by Sarah Are*

## *JOURNALING PROMPTS* | Releasing

*Fill in the blanks for the following statements.*

*Write what immediately comes to mind—don't overthink it.*



I think rich people are \_\_\_\_\_

I think poor people are \_\_\_\_\_

God thinks rich people are \_\_\_\_\_

God thinks poor people are \_\_\_\_\_

When it comes to money, God wants me to be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I have money issues, I rely on \_\_\_\_\_

Now, notice how you felt when you answered these questions.

Did you feel shame? Guilt? Fear? Unsettled? Proud? Confused?

What has the Church, as you have known it, communicated about the answer to these questions? What needs to be released from these stories so that you can reimagine God's new economy?



*Finding Release* | Lauren Wright Pittman





*READ* | Matthew 19:16-22

*FROM THE ARTIST* | Lauren Wright Pittman

As I write this in the midst of a global pandemic,<sup>2</sup> we are collectively grieving countless losses and desperately seeking answers to quell our fears of what's to come. The economy is nosediving and many face grave illness or even death. Some can't see past the fog of new living restrictions and are calling to reopen the economy because they believe it will save us. Others are choosing to stay home, risking economic fallout, to protect the lives of the vulnerable.

When afraid, we turn inward. I see fear and loneliness in the rich man. He's focused on an individual path, leading to his personal salvation, while missing the full picture. The man's wealth may cause him comfort, but it does not exist in a vacuum. His wealth affects the lives of others—particularly those at the margins of society.

Jesus offers the rich man spiritual grounding that completely threatens his financial stability, but it's good news just the same. Jesus reveals to the rich man the truth that we are all connected. Jesus chooses to name commandments concerning interpersonal relationships and community (v. 18-19). Jesus offers the rich man freedom from his entanglement with wealth, and gifts him belonging and a way forward (v. 21). The rich man feels the weight of this truth. To “*enter this life*” he must recognize his responsibility for his neighbor, because our lives are interwoven.

Instead of grasping to Jesus' lifeline, the rich man turns away because he cannot fathom losing everything. His grief feels palpable in this time of upheaval. I meditated on his grief, layering dusty purples, muted greens, and chalky blacks. I imagine the rich man isn't turning away from Jesus altogether. Perhaps he's taking space to feel his grief, processing all he will lose so he can truly find release.

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2. Written in April 2020, in the surge of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19.

### *PROMPTS FOR VISUAL MEDITATION*

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Lastly, use your imagination. If you could put yourself in the image, where would you be and why? How would you interact with what surrounds you?



## PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION | Matthew 19:16-22

- This story ends with the rich man departing and grieving as he goes. What do you imagine happens next for him? What's the next chapter of his story?
  
- Refer to this statement from the artist, Lauren Wright Pittman: *"Jesus chooses to name commandments concerning interpersonal relationships and community (v. 18-19)."* How are the commandments Jesus recites in verses 18-19 connected to the commandment he gives the rich man in verse 21?
  
- Where does grief or sadness show up in your money story? How might you practice releasing what causes you grief or sadness?



*Release* | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



*READ* | Deuteronomy 15:1-11

*FROM THE ARTIST* | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

The Israelites wandered the desert for forty years. Forty years was just long enough for them to let go of what they used to know, to doubt their purpose, to question God's presence, to cultivate resilience. But it was not long enough for the sting of slavery to recede from their bones. It was not long enough for them to forget the way greed can corrupt the hearts of the powerful, the way economic disparity can bleed into overt racism, the way empire can be built on the backs of forced laborers. And so, near the end of their wilderness chapter, God guides Moses to help them release the harmful systems of their past to reimagine a new way of doing life together.

These instructions in Deuteronomy become a guide for their new economy. The scheduled practice of releasing debts every seven years was designed to be both preventive and restorative. It prevented the wealth gap from growing beyond repair. It prevented systemic poverty from becoming strategic enslavement. It softened hearts turned cold and loosened fists clenched too tight. This practice of release reminds us that net worth is not synonymous with self-worth. It cuts into greed and bondage wherever it has taken root.

How might we adopt practices of financial release in our current economy? When it comes to money, we are hard-wired to fixate on deserving. What did you do to *cause* this debt? What qualifies you to *deserve* a forgiveness loan? How did you *earn* this income?

And yet, in God's story, money—like grace—is released wherever it is needed instead of where it is deserved.

### *PROMPTS FOR VISUAL MEDITATION*

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## *PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION* | Deut. 15:1-11

- What would it look like if all of your debts were canceled? How would this change how you live and how you feel? How would this impact your future? Now imagine someone you know who is trapped by debt. How would canceling their debt change their life?
  
- What parts of your story are begging for release? Do you need to release the need to always be productive? The need to constantly prove your worth? The shame of having too much or too little? Painful labels and unmet expectations?
  
- Similar to the year of canceled debts, what ways could we practice financial release—in our relationships, our businesses, our churches, our government?

***PRAY*** Take a deep breath in. As you exhale, release to God anything in your money story that holds tension, fear, or shame. Take another deep breath in. As you exhale, remember your belovedness in God. Breathe in and out, releasing and remembering as many times as you need.

REIMAGINE

*Love, By Another Way*

I used to think that love was simple.  
 You would know when you know,  
 What was meant, would be.  
 But I fell in love  
 And it's not that easy.  
 It's compromise and identity,  
 Mountains and valleys,  
 Apologies and memories,  
 Imbalance, recentering.  
 It turns out,  
 Love took reimagining.

I used to think that Church  
 was simple.  
 Church was community, not  
 the walls,  
 Faith and hope mixed with call.  
 But then the world grew  
 violently sick  
 And the way to be Church  
 Was to keep distance.  
 So doors were closed,  
 And people sent home.  
 It was all love, by another way.  
 And yet it was not how we  
 imagined Sunday.

I used to think that justice  
 was simple,  
 That I could make a difference,  
 all by myself.  
 There was a clear right and  
 wrong, a way I could help.  
 But then I learned of privilege  
 and bias,  
 Of white savior complex and our  
 Church's silence.  
 And all at once, it wasn't so easy.  
 I needed to learn. I needed to listen.  
 I needed to reframe my  
 original vision.

I guess what I'm trying to say is  
 Life will throw first drafts  
 our way.

The chance to dream,  
 To lead, to sing,  
 To love, and give,  
 To pray, and be.  
 But in order to grow,  
 To follow God's lead,  
 We have to do the work—  
 Reimagining.

And despite our best efforts,  
 Love will fail.  
 Churches will close.  
 Justice will leave the  
 vulnerable exposed.  
 And when that happens,  
 We must own our part,  
 Say we're sorry  
 And try to restart.

So write it all down.  
 And write it again.  
 A first draft,  
 A second,  
 An epilogue, and then  
 Share it with me  
 And we will pray.

And the spirit will move,  
 And maybe one day,  
 We can write this world  
 inside heaven's gate.

For I am  
 Starting to believe  
 That what matters in life  
 Will never be easy.  
 So we must imagine and  
 imagine again.  
 We must dream and try, die and rise.  
 And in our rising, may we see  
 The next right reimagined thing  
 Until step by step we are home.

Love, by another way.

*Poem by Sarah Are*





## *JOURNALING PROMPTS* | Reimagining

*Record your responses to the following prompts in your personal journal, or on additional sheets of paper.*

- Draw a line down your page to form two columns. In the left column, make a list of what drives our current economy (*For example: profit, consumption, competition, need, choice, etc.*).
- On the right column, list what drives the economy of the kingdom of God. What does Jesus give us a glimpse of?
- Now look at the lists in both columns. What is in opposition and what could live in harmony? What would it take to dissolve the barrier between these separate columns? What actions could bring the kingdom of God into our current economy?

To seek restoration, we must begin by reimagining—by harmonizing what we believed was dissonant, by dissolving the barriers and definitions we've always known.



*Lament of a Gift* | Hannah Garrity



READ | Mark 12:38-44

FROM THE ARTIST | Hannah Garrity

In this painting, I have depicted two coins from the time of Jesus. Two. Two is not enough to live on. Economist Thomas Picketty's new book, *Capital and Ideology* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), details how societies throughout the ages have structured inequality into their/our economic systems. He argues that the economy is not a force of nature. Human ideology shapes the economy. Marshall Steinbaum sums up Picketty's new work: "In his sweeping new history, the economist systematically demolishes the conceit that extreme inequality is our destiny, rather than our choice."<sup>3</sup>

In this text, Jesus agrees with Picketty. An exegesis of this text by Addison Wright establishes that Jesus is actually lamenting the widow's gift.<sup>4</sup> Wright cites Jesus' overall viewpoint on the financial structures of the day, arguing that this cannot be an affirmation of the widow's selflessness. Rather, it must be a lament of the societal structures that cause the widow to give all of her resources to organized religion.

For me, the lament perspective on this traditional stewardship text is transformational. It is inspiring me to engage financially with the Church in a much more personal way. With sudden clarity, I connected the fact that Jesus' Church is the financial ideology I believe in. The hypocrisy that Jesus observes in this text is the same hypocrisy that I have always struggled with as a member of the Church of the present. So, what actions can I take, what questions can I ask, and what conversations can I have to ensure that the Church I am giving to is the Church Jesus meant to create?

3 Steinbaum, Marshall. "Thomas Picketty Takes On the Ideology of Inequality." Published on the Boston Review. March 25, 2020. <http://bostonreview.net/class-inequality/marshall-steinbaum-thomas-picketty-takes-ideology-inequality>.

4 Wright, Addison G. "The Widow's Mites: Praise or Lament?—A Matter of Context." Published on The ATLA Serials. <http://www.pas.rochester.edu/~tim/study/Widow's%20Mite.pdf>.

### *PROMPTS FOR VISUAL MEDITATION*

Center yourself by taking a deep breath and relaxing your body as best you can. Spend a few moments in quiet, following the prompts below for a time of visual meditation.

Flip back to the previous page and rest your eyes on the art. Simply read the image, observing the colors, shapes, composition and textures.

Then, take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes immediately drawn to? What parts of the image did you quickly brush by or overlook?

Lastly, use your imagination. If you could put yourself in the image, where would you be and why? How would you interact with what surrounds you?

*PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION* | Mark 12:38-44



- Return to Mark 12:38-40. How do these verses provide the context for Jesus' response to the widow's offering in verses 41-44? If the widow's mite is a familiar story for you, how does reading verses 38-40 help you reimagine the impact and tone of Jesus' words?
  
- Look closely at the text. What behaviors, systems, and intentions does Jesus condemn? Where do you see these behaviors, systems, and intentions at play in our modern world and in your own life?
  
- Use your imagination to rewrite this story so that it paints an image of the kingdom of God for everyone. Now insert yourself as a character in your reimagined story. What part do you play in this kingdom vision?



*Jubilee* | Lauren Wright Pittman



*READ* | Leviticus 19:9-10; 25:8-12

*FROM THE ARTIST* | Lauren Wright Pittman

In the Year of Jubilee, God offers rest—a break for farmers, relief for those experiencing economic injustice, and Sabbath for the land. This radical rest is counter to the rhythm of our lives; it resists valued ideologies like efficiency and productivity and has broad economic implications. Jubilee has remained a theoretical, hopeful concept tucked away in scripture. This kind of radical slowing down is difficult to imagine, however... so is a global, economy-halting pandemic.

Rest feels unnatural in a pandemic,<sup>5</sup> but it's available to us if we are willing to receive it. Rest slows our vision and illuminates gifts that normally whirl by us. While sheltering in place, I've searched for positivity, and during such great loss, I've found more—more time, space, and color. I found a patch of mint in my yard, and the scent became my soul's balm. Rest offers recovery. The earth is thriving with a break from humanity. Scientists are seeing significant decreases in air pollution and animals are returning to previously uninhabitable waterways.

Rest offers perspective. God does not want us worn ragged, reaping the maximum extent of our harvest. God wants new eyes for us to recognize broken systems so we can enact change that sustains everyone: *"You shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God"* (v.10). God is found in the connective tissue of our relationships to our neighbor—particularly those most vulnerable.

Rest reminds us of our interconnectedness. Despite physical distancing, people are rediscovering one another while longing for and celebrating every moment of connection. Despite future insecurity, people are finding innovative ways to support one another. Rest uncovers the enoughness in our lives, and as my dear mentor used to say, *"Enough is abundance."* What will we glean from this time of rest?

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<sup>5</sup> Written in April 2020, in the surge of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19; however, we hope the message of rest is relevant to you no matter when you read these words.

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*PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION* | Lev. 19:9-10; 25:8-12



- Consider the directives in Leviticus 19:9-10. How could you leave the edge of your own harvest and resources to share with the poor and the immigrant?
  
- Imagine people returning to their homes and families for rest and Sabbath. Imagine debts forgiven and prisoners freed. Imagine enough harvest for all. What might a biblical-style Jubilee look like in your community?
  
- The artist, Lauren Wright Pittman, writes: *“Rest reminds us of our interconnectedness. Despite physical distancing, people are rediscovering one another while longing for and celebrating every moment of connection.”* How have you re-prioritized rest and relationships in light of physical distancing measures implemented due to the global pandemic?

*PRAY* God of Jubilee, upend my internal narratives about my worth and security. Gather me into your holy imagination of what is possible. Invite me into a new way of being.

**RESTORE**

*Pocket-Sized Moments*

I wonder if we will know when restoration comes.  
Will it feel big and dramatic like a summer rain?  
Joyful and overwhelming, like an end-of-war parade?  
Maybe.

Or will it be small?  
Will it be pocket-sized moments, like wishing on stars,  
The sun through the curtains, or lightning bugs in the yard?  
Maybe.

I don't know how God will restore this world,  
Just like I don't know how to make the summer rain.

But I do know how to say I'm sorry.  
And I do know how to love with all of me.  
And I know how to say, "This cup is for you,"  
And I know how to taste grace in grape juice.

So on the off-chance that restoration *will* be small,  
Pocket-sized moments of love for all,  
I will bake bread and save a seat for you.  
I will say I'm sorry and say I love you too.  
I will plant gardens and look for fireflies.  
I will say prayers on shooting stars at night.

And when the sun shines through my curtain windows,  
Remind me to open them wide.  
I would hate to miss God's parade,  
These holy ordinary days.

*Poem by Sarah Are*

## *JOURNALING PROMPTS* | Restoring

*Record your responses to the following prompts in your personal journal, or on additional sheets of paper.*



- Write a list of the words you would use to honestly describe your current money story.
- Thinking about what in your story needs restoration, write a list of the words you want to use to describe your money story. Where is there overlap in your two lists? Where is there disconnect?
- Now list the concrete actions you and your faith community might take to bring about a new economy—to bring forth God's economy. Start small, for you need small wins. Share your ideas with a conversation partner.

*Restore (verb): To give back, return<sup>6</sup>*

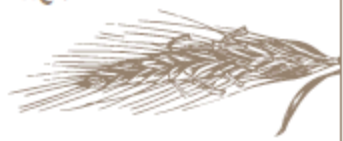
Let us engage in the act of restoration by giving back that which is not ours but is God's—by returning to God's vision for our world.

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<sup>6</sup> Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "restore," accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/practice>.



*Safety Net* | Hannah Garrity



*READ* | John 21:1-19

*FROM THE ARTIST* | Hannah Garrity

How does this miracle text relate to our present fear? Right now, in the midst of COVID-19, people are dying, people are losing their livelihoods, people are isolated, people are going to run out of food, people are going to run out of money, people are going to lose their family members, people will lose their homes. This moment in our story delivers scarcity in ways that we have not seen in living memory. Our whole precious global society could unravel.

Can we be the safety net?

Three weeks into stay-at-home orders, our local food banks are being tapped more heavily than normal. Economic stimulus checks are arriving in American bank accounts. Factories are retooling to build medical equipment. The public is following the stay-at-home measures. Legislative consensus should ensure that unemployment will be enough for many to survive on. All of these miraculous actions are funded by each of us.

In the artwork, patterned fish represent the miracle that Jesus performed that morning so many years ago. This miracle convinced the disciples that they must tell the story of Jesus and act out the love Jesus modeled. This miracle continues to inspire us to contribute and act as God's disciples in this critical time for humanity.

We are the safety net.

As I worked with this text, I contemplated that money has a lot to do with saving lives. Therefore, the background of this piece is woven with a guilloché pattern, reminiscent of currency. It portrays the flow of financial resources from government support, to charities, to crowdfunding, to church missions that are the fabric of the net that will catch us all.

Jesus inspires us in this text—and in this moment—to weave God's safety net.

### *PROMPTS FOR VISUAL MEDITATION*

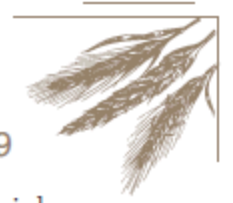
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*PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION* | John 21:1-19



- In the chaos and fear incited by Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples return to what they know—fishing by the sea. But in their despair, they catch nothing. When Jesus calls to them from shore, he invites them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. This simple change fills their nets with more fish than they could possibly eat. Perhaps this simple change was symbolic, too. Jesus was inviting them to turn away— from their past narratives, their fear, their despair—and turn to the promises of resurrection. In your own story, where is God inviting you to turn?
  
- Simon Peter denied Christ three times before his death. And here, after Jesus' resurrection, he is restored three times by affirming his love for Jesus (John 21:15-17). In your own life, when has love restored what has been broken by fear and betrayal?
  
- Once Simon Peter is restored by love, Jesus invites him to feed his sheep. The feast is not for Peter or the disciples alone. It must be shared. What tangible ways do you follow in Peter's footsteps to feed God's sheep and share the feast?



*Return* | Lisle Gwynn Garrity





*READ* | Genesis 33:1-17

*FROM THE ARTIST* | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Jacob and Esau shared a womb but soon grew to be enemies. Torn apart first by Jacob's hunger for status (*he buys Esau's birthright*) and then by Jacob's deceit (*he steals Esau's inheritance*), their relationship is deeply fractured by money.

They become estranged—living in different lands with different families, cultures, and customs. Jacob steers clear of Esau, fearing Esau will kill him, until the time comes to leave his father-in-law, Laban, and return home to Canaan. But to do this, Jacob must pass through Esau's territory in Mount Seir. He must come face-to-face with the brother he has wronged.

In this image, I've imagined the moment they meet—Esau winged with an army of men, and Jacob bowing, offering up half of his wealth and household. Esau's men hover behind him, ready for the signal to charge. Instead, they watch Esau run to Jacob, embracing him with tears and warmth. Somehow, over the years, Esau's rage has softened. He has found a way to make peace with the past. Esau looks beyond Jacob at his children and maids—at what Jacob offers to him as reparation for what he stole. "I have enough, my brother," Esau replies. Esau has learned what Jacob struggled to know from the start—that constant striving for more leads only to suffering.

In this encounter, Jacob finally bows before Esau, owning up to his wrongs and giving up his power. And yet, after this stunning moment of reconnection and forgiveness, Jacob journeys away from Esau to Succoth. They cannot continue side-by-side. Perhaps there are too many wounds, too much harm done.

Forgiveness does not cancel out pain. Restoration does not erase wounds. Restoration invites us to return what we have wrongfully taken from others, to return to God's hopes for us. In restoration, we return to enough.

### *PROMPTS FOR VISUAL MEDITATION*

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*PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION* | Genesis 33:1-17



- Though Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, they lived as enemies. Jacob scarred their relationship by deceiving their father and stealing Esau's inheritance. In your money story, are there relationships where you have felt a bit like Esau—deceived, cheated, or wronged? Are there relationships where you have felt a bit like Jacob—the one who has caused harm?
  
- When Esau sees Jacob bow before him, he is moved to tears. What do you imagine led Esau to this moment of reconciliation? What is required for true reconciliation to occur?
  
- How do practices of stewardship invite us into restoration and right relationship with one another?

*PRAY* God, your love restores souls. In my life and community, I ask that you restore \_\_\_\_\_. Fill my story with healing, grace, and renewed life. Thank you for breathing in us new ways of being.



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