



## Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith

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### Gathering (20 minutes)

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#### **A blessing for the seekers**

Blessed are you who turn your face up to the sky,  
who open your arms to feel the wind,  
who notice all the things that we should notice.  
Blessed are you who are fluent in wonder  
and familiar with awe.  
Blessed are you who, even now, dream dreams,  
who have not lost hope,  
who swear the glass is still half-full.  
Blessed are you who plant trees  
and sing the harmony,  
who tell the children how this world can be magic.  
Blessed are you who  
walk and seek  
and turn over every stone,  
pointing out all the corners and colours  
that God lives in.  
Blessed are you.  
Amen.

*Poem by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed*

What is your soul yearning for?  
What is holding you back from soulful, wholehearted exploration?  
What do you need to know about God to trust God more fully?  
What do you need to discover about yourself to enter life more fully?  
Is there another question your soul needs to ask?

#### **Prayer**

God of the Way, give us willing hearts for the Lenten quest that lies ahead.  
Remind us that you honour our questions and can be trusted with our longings.  
Help us remember that you are seeking us, and we can rest in being found, even as we  
venture into the unknown.  
Guide our steps and bring clarity and love more fully into our hearts.  
May our way be the Jesus way, whatever steps we take. Amen.

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**Seeking (40 minutes)**

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**Reading: Matthew 4:1-11**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' <sup>4</sup>But he answered, 'It is written,

"One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." '

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple,

<sup>6</sup>saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you",

and "On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; <sup>9</sup>and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

"Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him." '

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us,  
***Thanks be to God!***

Read through the passage slowly.

Read it through again.

What do you notice?

Is there something you are noticing for the first time?

What questions do you have - for yourself? For God?

Have you ever spent time "in the wilderness"?

If so, what was that like? How did it feel? What did you learn?

In addition to this account in Matthew 4, Jesus regularly went away on his own to pray.  
Sometimes he took his small group of disciples.

How often do you go away from all the distractions of the world to spend time with God?

What stops you from making time for prayer? Busyness? Fear? Not a priority?

What might you need to do to carve out time for prayer?

Jesus was well-equipped to answer the devil's challenges.

How well do you know the Scriptures?

What commitment will you make to learning and understanding more?

*You might also like to spend some time with the visio divine exercise on the back.*

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### Responding (40 minutes)

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Return to the questions we asked at the beginning:

What is your soul yearning for?

What is holding you back from soulful, wholehearted exploration?

What do you need to know about God to trust God more fully?

What do you need to discover about yourself to enter life more fully?

Is there another question your soul needs to ask?

How has God been speaking to you today?

*Spend some time journaling, walking and talking to God, drawing - whatever enables you to capture your thoughts.*

*If you are waling, you might want to collect something that speaks to you or that symbolises your questions and/or conversation with God.*

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### Sending (10 minutes)

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#### **Sending Affirmation**

In a world full of noise,

***we believe that God is speaking.***

In a world full of chaos,

***we believe that God is singing.***

In a world full of temptation,

***we believe that God is healing.***

Church, who will you listen to?

***We will listen to God—our Creator, Friend, and Guide.***

Church, what will you listen for?

***We will listen for water in the desert, for the wind of the Spirit,***

***for the laughter of children,***

***for the sound of open doors,***

***and for God's voice, who calls us beloved.***

***Amen.***

#### **Blessing**

As you leave this place,

may God bless you with seeking.

Seek out the hungry.

Seek the weary.

Seek the good in every person you pass.

Seek out the hopeful.

Seek the faithful.

Seek God in each of us.

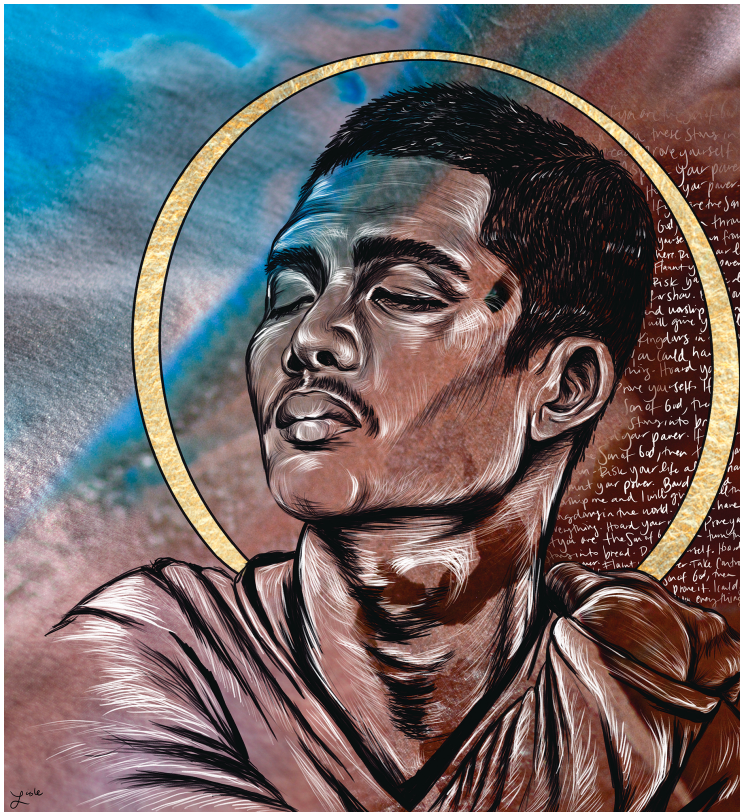
As you seek and as you wonder,

may you find what you are looking for.

In the name of our loving God,

who is always seeking us,

go now in peace. Amen.



Tune In  
Lisle Gwynn Garrity  
Silk painting with digital drawing and collage  
© A Sanctified Art | [sanctified art.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)

In this image, the words of the Tempter hover in the background. The Tempter's voice lingers like a ringing in Jesus' ears, saying: "Take charge. Hoard your power. Dominate. Control."

Somehow, Jesus has deciphered that these words are simply background noise. He closes his eyes and goes inward, wrapping himself in a posture of self-embrace. From this introspective perspective, Jesus essentially says, "Get behind me, Satan."

The backdrop of this piece resembles the dust of the desert. Like sand washing along a beach, the sediment shifts into water in the top left, hinting at what bolsters Jesus in his ministry: his belonging to God. His belovedness washes over him, giving him the courage to defy the deception of the Tempter and tune into his inner wisdom. In this way, he is given a new song to carry with him, a lullaby from God

that goes, "You, my child, in you, I am well-pleased." This is a melody for singing, a song for dancing.

What are the voices that linger with you like a ringing in your ears? What are the messages that try to deceive or devour you? Let those voices buzz and fade into the background. Close your eyes, tune in, and embrace yourself. From your belovedness, what song will you sing?

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

## Visio Divina

Center yourself by taking a deep breath and relaxing your body as best you can. Allow your shoulders to lower away from your ears. Let your arms rest in your lap and let your feet be fully supported by the floor. Feel the weight of your body held by the chair. Spend this time in quiet. Open yourself up to God's voice.

*(pause)*

Take a deep breath in and out. Continue breathing deeply as you read the image. In this moment, simply notice the visual qualities of what you see: colours, line, shape, form, space, and texture.

*(pause)*

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

*(pause)*

And now, use your imagination.

Imagine yourself in this piece. Where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?

*(pause)*

And now, read the artist's notes. What new insights do you discover?

*(pause)*

Finally, observe your own emotions. How does this image make you feel?

*(pause)*