

Making the Most of Wednesday, August 12

"...the way is hard that leads to life..." –Matt. 7:14



BETWEEN 6:00—9:00 AM: For believers, LIFE awaits, despite our *"light momentary affliction"* (2 Cor. 4:7). "We're already alive," you say. Yes, but not the way we'll live when we reach the end of this present road. Until then, we press on. Walker Percy wrote the following in *The Timbered Choir*: "There is a day when the road neither comes nor goes, and the way is not a way but a place."

In this art piece above by Kat Massey, look where the path that winds through the forest finally ends. We can't make out details, but just see a glow above the trees, as if from a great city. That's fitting. We don't exactly know what the destination will be like, other than that it will be marvelous. As the Apostle Paul wrote: *"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"* -- 1 Cor. 2:9). The nature of this *"life"* at the end is a one, big surprise.

However, if we take some hints from the Beatitudes, we can count on receiving a kingdom that is full of comfort, satisfaction, mercy, public acclamation as God's own children, and best of all, a never-ending vision of the Lord himself. Please open your Bible to Revelation 21:1-8 and be encouraged and challenged by what you read. Talk to the Lord about whatever occurs to you in these eight verses.

BETWEEN 9:00—12:00 PM: One word has been on my mind a lot lately: affliction. It's common in the Bible, and translated in different ways. Take Matthew 7:14 for example. Matthew writes that the road we take is "*hard*." This is the same word for "afflicted." How can a road be "afflicted"? By being constricted, narrow, and pressed in. Being squeezed in a variety of ways is the universal experience of believers.

Spend some time reflecting on 1 Thessalonians 3:1-12 where Paul writes to his afflicted friends in Thessalonica, hoping that their troubles won't lead them to cash in their faith. How has the COVID-19 crisis moved you, your family and friends either towards or away from the Lord? (See V.3).

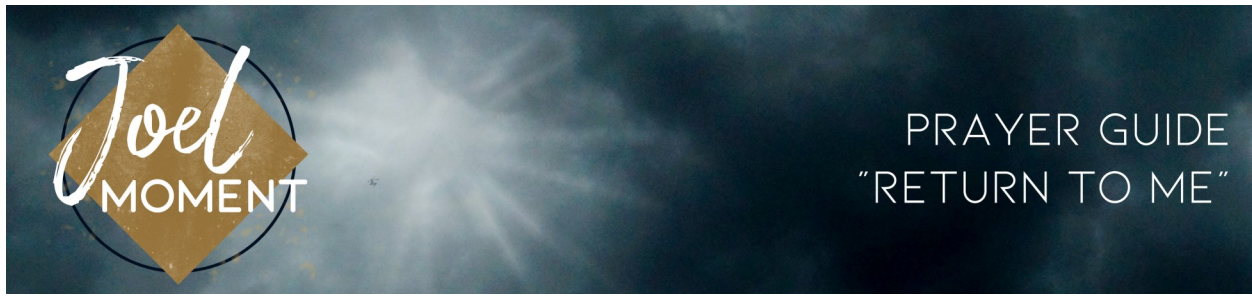
- 1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,*
2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,
3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.
4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.
5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.
6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you--
7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.
8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.
9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,
10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?
11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you,
12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,
(13) so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Paul, their Shepherd, lost his sleep but not his sheep! ("*Timothy has come...and has brought us the good news of your faith and love...*" — 1 Thes. 3:6). Let's pick one individual, family, small group or Sunday School Class, and pray that he, she or they will not deviate from the path but rather resist the devil and grow in hope and holiness. Then expect to hear good news about the spiritual progress they're making.

BETWEEN 12:00—3:00 PM: Let's sing to the Lord, because he's been deprived of our corporate praises for many months. Here are two verses from a travel song, "All the Way My Savior Leads Me."

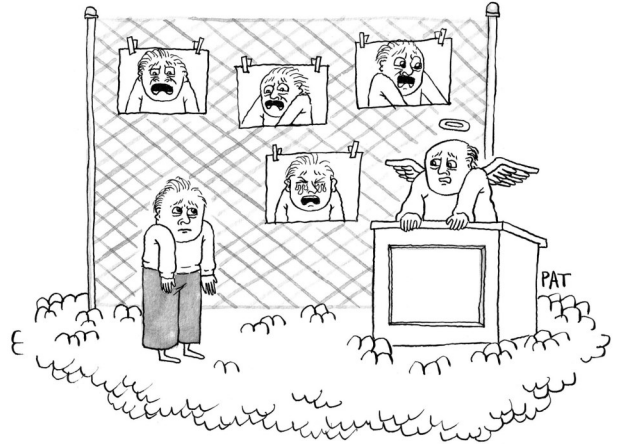
All the way my Savior leads me
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His faithful mercies?
Who through life has been my guide
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort
Ere by faith in Him to dwell
For I know whate'er fall me
Jesus doeth all things well

All of the way my Savior leads me
And He cheers each winding path I tread
Gives me strength for every trial
And He feeds me with the living bread
And though my weary steps may falter
And my soul a-thirst may be
Gushing from a rock before me
Though a spirit joy I see



BETWEEN 3:00—4:00 PM: Join the **Joel Moment Prayer Gathering**. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) and enter Meeting ID and Password.

BETWEEN 5:00—9:00 PM: I saw this cartoon in a magazine the other day. The caption reads: *"Welcome to Heaven. Would you like to buy a souvenir photo from your life?"* It shows a man surrounded by pictures of himself during his earthly pilgrimage. In each picture, his face is twisted in pain and anguish. The cartoon has some theological problems (e.g., there won't be an angel at a desk, but rather a King on his throne), but it gets this part right: Troubles abound on the road. So, we need to fortify ourselves and each other with the Holy Spirit.



^{ESV} **Acts 14:22** *strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

Here's a timely exhortation from Kulvi and Voldemar Maisov:

"As you asked about this...above all, one issue is thumping in us, and namely — that each believer be filled with the Holy Spirit at the level that they unmistakably know and can personally be lead by Him. Ephesians 4:30 says we are "sealed - secured, hidden, proven, authenticated, held and saved by Him — till the day of redemption." He is the One sent by God for our guidance and help, to reveal all God's truth...in times when the world is troubled in a rising flood of various turmoil and hate. No one will stand except by Him, but especially Christians to whom persecution is promised. In order to overcome, we each must be equipped by all that the Lord designed and taught to us, the full gospel (end of Matt 28)."

Before going off to sleep, review this Joel Moment Prayer Guide. You heard, learned or felt something that helped *"supply what is lacking in your faith"* (1 Thes. 3:10). Review your new riches and bless the Holy Supplier.



LAUREN RAFFENSPERGER [She'll tell us about some of the highs and lows on her road.]

ESV **2 Timothy 3:14** *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it*

Jot down insights God gives you through Lauren and be ready to share them at Joel Moment Part 2:

KELLEY MILLER [This is a song called "A Lament — Psalm 38."]

*Your hand is heavy upon me, My wounds are open,
I lay bowed face down, All day long I mourn
My longing is before you, My sighing is not hidden
My heart throbs, my strength fails, There's no longer light in my eyes
I cannot hear You, I know not what to say,
Yet I wait and I wait, For you to answer me
I am ready to fall, My pain is ever before me
I am feeble, I am crushed, I groan from the chaos in my heart
My sin is heavy, A burden too great to bear
I confess, I repent, Rebuke me not in your anger
Do not forsake me, Be not far from me O my God
Make haste, to help, O Lord You are my salvation, Amen.*

MARY SUE PROCTOR [You'll hear about the Wednesday Morning Mountain Movin' Mamas.]

Jot down insights God gives you through Mary Sue and be ready to share them at Joel Moment Part 2:



GROUP PRAYER PROMPT (30 min.): Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the forthrightness and audacity of those who approach God through Jesus: *“The child asks of the Father whom he knows. Thus, the essence of Christian prayer is not general adoration, but definite, concrete petition. The right way to approach God is to stretch out our hands and ask of One who we know has the heart of a Father.”*

ESV **1 Timothy 2:1-2** *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*

So, let’s make hundreds of specific requests of our Heavenly Father this afternoon in our Zoom Prayer Groups.

Record what God shows you in Joel Moment, Part 2 — that is, the time after 4:00 PM — when we share Scripture, intercede and support each other as the Holy Spirit leads us.
