

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL OF THANKS FROM LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

SOWING SEEDS OF GRATITUDE



Faithful Neighbors



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

DEAR Faithful Neighbor,

This year, we give thanks for 80 years of service — and we give thanks for you.

In the wake of World War II, our movement of hope began. Compassionate Lutherans, moved by faith and united as the Body of Christ, came together to respond boldly to the suffering of their neighbors across oceans and borders. At a time when an estimated 1 in 5 Lutherans had lost their homes, Lutheran churches across the United States mobilized to help through newly established Lutheran World Relief — planting seeds of renewal in places recovering from war and disaster.

Much has changed in 80 years. But because of your love, our mission endures.

Your faithful support stretches across generations and around the world — bringing relief where disaster strikes, supporting families fleeing conflict, and walking alongside communities as they build resilience in the face of hunger and devastating crises. Today, Lutheran World Relief works in East and West Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the United States, helping some of the poorest communities to not just survive but thrive. Together, we will not stop until war ceases, disasters calm and suffering ends — until your love reaches every neighbor.

We are reminded of a quote often attributed to Martin Luther:

“If I knew that tomorrow was the end of the world, I would plant an apple tree today.”

That’s what you do. Every time you give, pray, advocate or share the story — you are planting seeds of hope. Seeds that grow into harvests of healing, dignity and peace.

Thank you for joining us in this legacy of love. Because of you, the story of Lutheran World Relief continues — not just as a history of what has been, but as a bold vision for what will be.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7 NRSV



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

AMBASSADOR DANIEL SPECKHARD

President and CEO

Growing hope and security

Baleswor Mehta and family in Nepal

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

MATTHEW 14:19 NRSV

The feeding of the 5000 we read about in Matthew is a truly miraculous event. But the miracle in this story is not just the multiplication of bread and fish. The miracle is what happens when people respond in faith, when they plant the seeds they have, trusting that God can grow something more.

The story of a man named Baleswor, a farmer in Nepal, reflects the very same truth.

Six years ago, Baleswor lived in fear of the floods that regularly washed over his village. His crops would disappear beneath the water, and with them, his livelihood. He worried about how to feed his family, how to survive.

But because of your love — because of the seeds you have planted — through Lutheran World Relief, something changed.

Baleswor received training through our flood-resilience project. He learned how to stay safe during floods. He learned how to grow a more resilient kind of eggplant and rice — crops that won't wash away. He learned how to recognize early warning signs and seek shelter.

What once seemed like inevitable destruction is now met with confidence and preparation. As he says, "We are 75% assured that the flood won't damage the crops."

But the story doesn't stop there.

Eggplant farming has become the main focus of the community. Lutheran World Relief

partners encouraged a "one community, one crop" approach — because supporting one person is good, but supporting many is transformative.

As Baleswor says, "Before, it was not enough for the family... Now I farm, grow and eat. I married one of my daughters. I took care of my mother's last rites. I built a stronger house. Our group sends children to study engineering. Some bought new lands for farming. Everyone prospered."

Everyone prospered.

It started with a seed — knowledge, training, hope. But in God's hands, it became a harvest of healing, dignity and peace.

This is the same miracle we see in Matthew's Gospel. Not momentary kindness, but a movement of compassion. With deep trust in God's abundance, incredible things are possible. Feeding our neighbors in need across the world is not an unattainable goal, but a simple call from Jesus: "You give them something to eat."

Jesus invites us into the miracle. To give what we can. To plant the seeds we have. And to trust that God will grow them into something we could never imagine on our own.



MATTHEW 14:15-21 NRSV

¹⁵ When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

¹⁶ Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷ They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸ And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

DAY 1

What "five loaves and two fish" do you have to offer today? Reflect on ways God might use what feels small in your hands for something greater.

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Jesus,
When I feel small, remind me that you work miracles with small things. Help me offer what I can with open hands.
Amen.

DAY 2

When have you been tempted to say, "Send them away?" What fears or limitations keep you from stepping into God's call to serve?

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God of Abundance,
Help me recognize the many gifts and blessings in my life. Give me the courage to overcome any fears or prejudices keeping me from supporting my neighbors near and far.
Amen.

DAY 3

How does Baleswor's story challenge your understanding of hope and resilience? Share the seeds of transformation you can plant in your own community.

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God of the flood and the field,
Thank you for Baleswor and his story. Let his resilience inspire faith and action in me.
Amen.

DAY 4

What do you think it means to be part of a “movement of compassion?” How is that different from one-time charity?

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Lord,
Plant in me the courage and strength to continuously act when others are in need. Let my actions be an ongoing example of your love and compassion for the world.
Amen.

DAY 5

Where do you see abundance in your life — material or spiritual? How might you share it more freely?

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God who fed the multitudes,
Feed our world today — body and soul. Use me to bring hope, healing and daily bread.
Amen.

DAY 6

What does it look like for you to trust God with what you have, not knowing what the future holds? Reflect on a step of faithful action God might be inviting you to take.

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Merciful Savior,
Bless the seeds I plant, even when I cannot always see the harvest. Grow them into justice, peace and love for all.
Amen.

DAY 7

Who are the “crowds” around you today who are hungry — for food, dignity, peace or love? How is Jesus calling you to respond?

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Jesus,
You call us to feed and support others, not to look away. Help me hear your voice and answer, “Here I am, Lord.”
Amen.

Tending to community together Halimata Compaore in Burkina Faso

He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

LUKE 10:2 NRSV

In Luke 10, Jesus gathers his disciples, sending them out into the world — to dwell with their neighbors, accept what is offered and trust that the seeds they plant in faith will one day bear fruit.

That kind of faithful sending is not just something that happened long ago. It’s something that continues today — through people like Halimata Compaore in the village of Boore, in Burkina Faso.

Halimata is 51 years old, a mother of four. Like many women in her community, she has carried a heavy load. She left school early because her family couldn’t afford the fees. She married young. Her husband is now away in the city while she raises their children at home.

To support her family, Halimata worked as a local language teacher and sold steamed rice. But the income wasn’t enough. Every school fee, every trip to the doctor, every meal came with stress and sacrifice.

But then, something changed.

Halimata became part of a market-gardening cooperative. With the help of faithful Lutherans like you, she received training in gardening skills, access to a plot of land, seedlings, and fertilizer.

Now she grows onions, tomatoes, cabbage, eggplant, peppers — not just for survival, but for abundance.

And through this new work, something deeper has grown too: peace. The very peace Jesus speaks of in Luke 10.

Halimata no longer has to leave her family for months at a time. Her household is more stable. The misunderstandings that once strained her relationships have given way to shared purpose. Because we walked alongside Halimata and others in the cooperative long-term, they have transitioned from surviving to thriving.

This is what it means to be a laborer in the harvest — not just to bring food, but to grow dignity. Not just to teach, but to learn. Not just to go, but to stay. To walk with others until the seeds of change take root.

When you support the global work of Lutheran World Relief — when you give, pray, advocate and tell these stories — you are part of that movement. You are one of the laborers in God’s abundant harvest.

As Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

There’s still work to do. Still households in need of peace. Still women like Halimata, full of strength and potential, waiting for someone to come alongside them — with supportive solidarity.

So today, let us hear Jesus’ call — not as an ancient command, but as our living invitation.

Go, where God sends you.

Go, with peace, not judgment.

Go, with openness, not control.

Go, and plant.

Go, and trust that in God’s time, what is planted in faith will grow into a harvest of healing, dignity and peace.



LUKE 10:1-7 NRSV

¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ²He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid.

DAY 8

Where is God sending you, to share peace, to stay awhile? How might that kind of presence be a seed of transformation?

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*God of the harvest,
Send me where peace is needed. Help me do all things with peace and love,
accompanying others from surviving to thriving.
Amen.*

DAY 9

What assumptions do you carry when helping others? Do you go to teach, or also to learn? How might humility open the way to a deeper relationship?

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*Holy Spirit,
Teach me to walk beside others with humility. Make me a learner as well as a laborer
in Your field.
Amen.*

DAY 10

Jesus says, "The laborers are few." What is one small way you can be part of God's abundant harvest this week?

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*God of abundance,
Let me generously share my gifts with love, not pride. Let my presence bring peace,
planting seeds of goodness and compassion.
Amen.*

DAY 11

When have you experienced peace simply because someone stayed beside you?

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Jesus,

You send us out into the world to share your grace and love with our neighbors. Grant me the courage and patience to steadfastly remain with others in need of your peace.

Amen.

DAY 12

What does it mean to walk with others, not ahead of them?

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Christ,

Remind me that thriving begins with accompaniment. Help me show up fully, listen deeply and remain faithfully.

Amen.

DAY 13

In your life, are there people or communities you're being called to accompany more closely?

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Lord of every village and every heart,

Thank You for Halimata. Through her story, renew my courage to plant seeds of change.

Amen.

DAY 14

What "plot of land" has God given you? Time, resources, voice, relationships? How can you cultivate it into something life-giving for others?

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Lord,

Bless the hands that plant and the hearts that grow. May every seed become a story of hope.

Amen

Building resilience and reducing risks Cristian in El Salvador

“Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

JOHN 4:14 NRSV

In the highlands of Morazán, El Salvador, Cristian Ernesto Romero knows what it is to long for water like the Samaritan woman in our story from the book of John.

As a child, he learned to work the land with his father — planting beans, bananas and bamboo, depending on the nearby springs to nourish the soil and sustain his family. But those once-reliable waters have grown more uncertain. Unpredictable weather patterns, deforestation and mismanagement have turned steady springs into seasonal trickles. The crops struggle. The community suffers.

And yet, Cristian didn't walk away in despair.

He stepped in with purpose.

Through a Lutheran World Relief-supported program, Cristian began learning how to manage water resources, prevent disaster and protect creation. Today, he's not just a farmer — he's a teacher, a conservationist, a bearer of wisdom and hope for others.

And he says this:

“It's not enough to learn something. You have to share it. If you know how to solve a problem, you should help others do the same.”

Isn't that what the Samaritan woman did, too?

After her encounter with Jesus, after hearing his promise of living water, she didn't keep it to herself. She ran back to her village and became the first evangelist in the Gospel of John,

telling others, “Come and see.” Her thirst was met not only with refreshment but with purpose.

Living water is never meant to be hoarded. It's meant to flow. To be shared. To quench the thirst of communities. To restore creation. To become a spring of life that sustains not just one, but many.

Jesus invites us into transformation. The water he offers becomes a spring within us. A source of compassion, strength and mercy in our world.

Cristian's story is a witness to that. It shows us that living water doesn't always look miraculous. It often looks like local leadership, soil conservation, shared wisdom and people of faith stepping in when the world steps back.

Today, Jesus invites each of us again to the well. Not just to receive, but to become.

To become vessels of this living water.

To become teachers and learners.

To become protectors of creation.

To become neighbors who respond to thirst — not with scarcity, but with solidarity.

Because there are still communities walking long roads for water. Still fields waiting for rain. Still neighbors wondering if their children's future will dry up before it begins. Still people, all around us, whispering: “Sir, give me this water.” And we, the body of Christ, have something to offer. Not out of our own strength—but because we have been filled.

So let us go and share what we've received. Let us help protect what God has given. Let us be springs of justice and agents of hope. Because when we drink deeply from Christ's well, we will never be thirsty again — and neither will our neighbor.



JOHN 4:11-15 NRSV

¹¹The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” ¹³Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” ¹⁵The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

DAY 15

What are the “dry places” in your life or community where you long for renewal, healing or purpose? How might Jesus be offering you living water there?

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*Jesus, Source of Living Water,
Quench the thirst in me that I cannot satisfy on my own. Let your Spirit become a spring within me, renewing and overflowing with compassion for others.
Amen.*

DAY 16

Cristian didn’t walk away from a difficult situation, he stepped in with purpose. Where are you being called to step in with hope, rather than walk away in despair?

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*God of hope,
When the wells run dry and the soil cracks, give us the courage to step in — not walk away. Help us become part of the healing you are working in creation and community.
Amen.*

DAY 17

The Samaritan woman became a messenger, telling her neighbors about the living water she received. What good news have you experienced that you are being called to share?

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*Spirit of truth,
Open our eyes like the Samaritan woman’s, to see you at work in unexpected places. Make us bold to share the good news we have tasted and seen.
Amen.*

DAY 18

Cristian said, “If you know how to solve a problem, you should help others do the same.” What gifts, knowledge or resources do you have that might help your neighbor today?

Teacher and Guide,

Remind us that the knowledge you give is not just for our benefit. May we, like Cristian, pass on wisdom and work that nourishes others too.

Amen.

DAY 19

Jesus said the water he gives will become a spring gushing up to eternal life. What does it mean for you to be a source of living water for others?

Creator God,

We thank you for water that sustains life — and the living water that gives it meaning. Make us guardians of both, protecting your gifts with reverence and justice.

Amen.

DAY 20

Living water is meant to flow, to be shared, not stored. Are there places in your life where you’re being invited to move from scarcity to generosity?

God of abundance,

Keep us from hoarding your grace or withholding your love. Make us springs of justice and agents of peace, flowing with the life you have planted in us.

Amen.

DAY 21

Cristian’s story shows that transformation begins with small, faithful actions. What simple act of care for creation, for a neighbor, or for justice can you take this week?

Loving Savior,

We hear the cry of your people: “Sir, give me this water.” Let our lives be your answer — offering mercy, dignity and sustainable hope to every neighbor.

Amen.

Finding opportunity in unexpected places Libranita br Tarigan in Indonesia

The fruit of righteousness is sown
in peace by those who make peace.

JAMES 3:18 NRSV

The writer of James asks a question that cuts straight to the heart of the Christian life:

“Who is wise and knowledgeable among you?”

It’s tempting to answer with degrees, titles, platforms or credentials. But James offers another standard:

“Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.”

True wisdom, he says, does not push others aside to get ahead. Instead, true wisdom — the kind that comes from above — is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits.

In other words: God’s wisdom grows best in the soil of peace.

Libranita br Tarigan is a charismatic leader in the Cinta Rakyat community of the Karo Regency of North Sumatra, Indonesia. After taking her kids to school each morning, she supports community activities and works on the family farm.

Libranita and her family care deeply about the health and wellness of their community as they advocate to improve local sanitation, nutrition and hygiene.

“I have a principle that it is important to work in order to support the community,” Libranita says.

In rural Indonesian communities, many women and girls face daily challenges just to meet their basic needs, especially when it comes to hygiene and sanitation. Many schools lack

access to clean water or private toilets. Topics like menstrual hygiene are considered taboo. Girls stay home from school. Health problems go untreated. Shame and silence take root where there should be dignity and care.

But then came the peacemakers. The wisdom-bearers. The seed-sowers.

Through Lutheran World Relief and its local partners, women in these communities were invited into training programs focused on WASH: water, sanitation and hygiene. They learned how to build handwashing stations, how to care for their health, how to speak up and teach others.

But they didn’t just take in the knowledge, they shared it. They became leaders in their communities. Teachers. Mentors. Advocates. They started conversations about menstruation and hygiene in spaces where those words had never been spoken aloud. They built facilities that gave girls the chance to stay in school with dignity. As Libranita shares,

“All of the people here in my community are hard workers. All of them are strong.”

And the fruit of righteousness? It’s growing all around them. Clean water. Healthy children. Informed communities. Girls who are no longer ashamed. Women who know they are leaders.

James tells us that peace — the peace of Christ, rooted in humility — leads to flourishing. This kind of wisdom doesn’t go viral on social media. It doesn’t always get applause or headlines. It looks like a woman building a wash basin outside a rural school. It looks like a girl staying in class without fear. It looks like dignity being restored, one conversation at a time.

It’s slow work. It’s faithful work. And it bears good fruit. And here’s the beautiful part: you are part of that harvest.

Through your support, prayers, advocacy and partnership, you are among the sowers of peace. You are bearing witness to wisdom that does not seek to dominate, but to uplift. You are helping plant seeds that will bear fruit far beyond what we can see.



JAMES 3:13-18 NRSV

¹³ Who is wise and knowledgeable among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be arrogant and lie about the truth. ¹⁵ This is not wisdom that comes down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶ For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

DAY 22

What does a “good life” look like in your context? And how is it shaped by gentleness born of wisdom?

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*Divine Gardener,
Help me trust that you will provide and that slow-growing righteousness is still your holy work.
Amen.*

DAY 23

When have you been tempted to define wisdom by achievement, instead of by peace, mercy or humility?

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*God of peace,
Teach me to seek wisdom not in status, but in quiet service and gentle strength.
Amen.*

DAY 24

How might envy or a scarcity mentality, however subtle, be interfering with peace in your own heart or community?

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*Holy Spirit,
Root out envy and greed in me, and grow in their place a spirit of generosity and humility.
Amen.*

DAY 25

What does it mean for wisdom to be “willing to yield” in our culture of constant self-assertion?

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*Wisdom from above,
Shape me into a vessel of compassion, bearing fruit that heals and uplifts.
Amen.*

DAY 26

Where have you seen the fruit of righteousness growing slowly but faithfully, perhaps unnoticed or uncelebrated?

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*Creator of all communities,
Water the seeds of dignity, justice and joy wherever they are planted.
Amen.*

DAY 27

How do women like Libranita embody wisdom that uplifts her community?

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*God of mercy,
Bless the labor of women like Libranita, who lead with courage and advocate with grace.
Amen.*

DAY 28

What seeds of dignity, healing or peace are you being invited to plant right now?

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*God of every good gift,
Remind me that I am part of your harvest, called to sow peace with each step I take.
Amen.*



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