



*Week 1*

**HOPE**

*Daily Prayer:*

Faithful God, whose promises stand unshaken through all generations: renew us in hope, that we may be awake and alert, watching for the glorious return of Jesus Christ, our Judge and Saviour, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



# Day 1

Welcome to day 1 of our journey ...

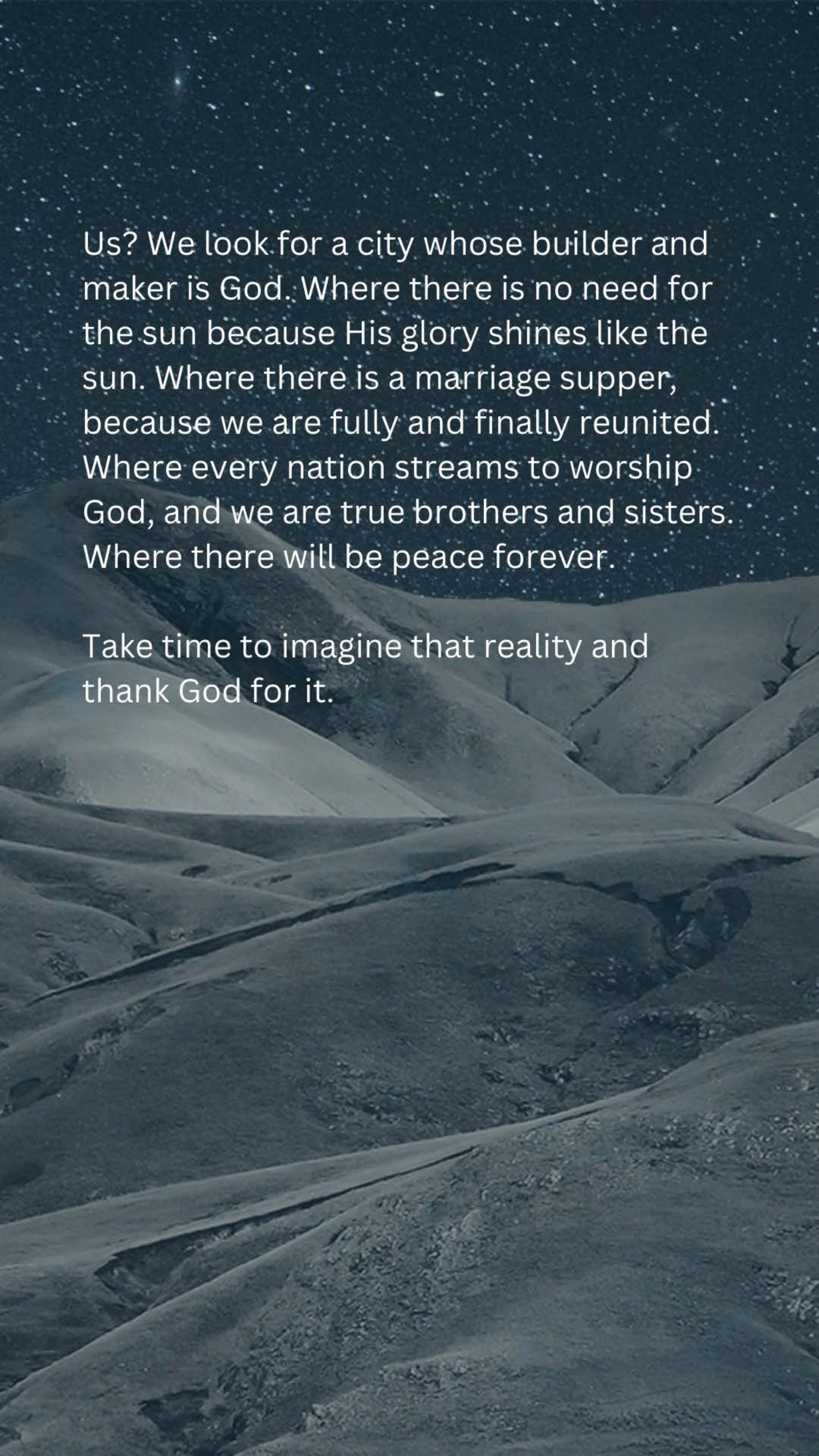
Today's reading is **Isaiah 2**

Christians everywhere have applied the Christmas season to look forward to the day Jesus comes and look back to when He came. When we look forward, we identify with the Israelites who were captured and taken to Babylon (approx. 597 BC). They were the people of God; we are the people of God. They were waiting for their Saviour; we are waiting for our Saviour. They were longing for home; we long for home.

v1-5 This text had a meaning for those in exile, longing to be back in Jerusalem, worshipping and celebrating the festivals of the Lord. They longed for no more invasions, no more battles, but a time of peace.





The image features a dark, starry night sky as the background. The stars are small, white points of light scattered across the dark blue and black expanse. Below the sky, there is a dark, textured landscape that appears to be a desert or a rocky terrain, with various ridges and valleys. The overall color palette is monochromatic, consisting of shades of blue, black, and white.

Us? We look for a city whose builder and maker is God. Where there is no need for the sun because His glory shines like the sun. Where there is a marriage supper, because we are fully and finally reunited. Where every nation streams to worship God, and we are true brothers and sisters. Where there will be peace forever.

Take time to imagine that reality and thank God for it.



## Day 2

Welcome to day 2 of our journey ...

Today's reading is **Romans 13:8-14**

If we are serious about a future day (and we are), it should affect our current day. The foundation of our life choices is not rules and punishment, and fear of that future day, but LOVE.

If we love our neighbour, we will not sleep with his wife.

If we love our neighbour, we will not long for her stuff, rather, we will celebrate it.

If we love our neighbour, we will not talk smack about him.

If we love our neighbour, we will not take advantage of her.

Let's not be like the Pharisee and ask, "Well, who is my neighbour?" in an attempt to narrow this powerful fulfillment of the whole law into a shoebox that gives us an out to behave ordinarily to some; let's pick up our weapons of light, let's put on Jesus, and get ready to fight.



## Day 3

Welcome to day 3 of our journey ...

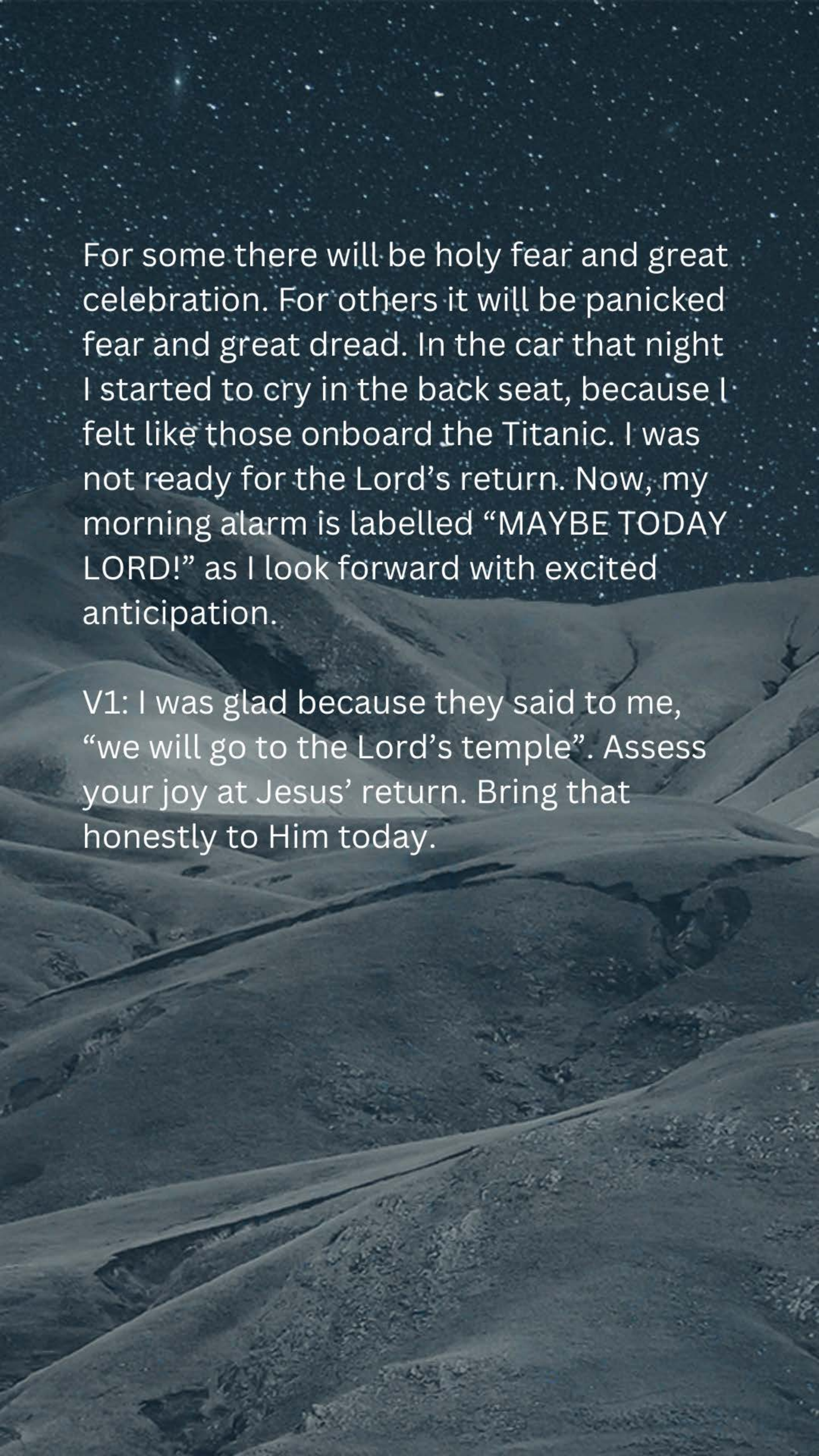
Today's reading is **Psalm 122**

In light of our theme, we are reading this Psalm not as the original writer or reader was intending it, but as those who are looking forward to a day when the tribes and nations stream toward the throne of the King of kings, King Jesus. Read the Psalm again and insert "new" before everywhere you see Jerusalem.

As we look forward to Jesus' return with great hope, assess your internal reaction. When my mum, my sister and I went and watched Titanic in 1998, we were unpacking the movie on our way home. My sister said that the sudden surprise the passengers felt (spoilers: the Titanic was a cruise ship that sank) must be the way that some will feel when Jesus returns.







For some there will be holy fear and great celebration. For others it will be panicked fear and great dread. In the car that night I started to cry in the back seat, because I felt like those onboard the Titanic. I was not ready for the Lord's return. Now, my morning alarm is labelled "MAYBE TODAY LORD!" as I look forward with excited anticipation.

V1: I was glad because they said to me, "we will go to the Lord's temple". Assess your joy at Jesus' return. Bring that honestly to Him today.



## Day 4

Today's reading is **Matthew 24:36-44**

Depending on your background, you will have different accompanying thoughts and feelings from this passage.

Perhaps you have heard it preached, and you felt it was an attempt to scare people to give their lives to Christ.

Who could ever forget the picture of the swinging electric razor from the 70s movie where the wife is left behind to face perilous times – all the Christians having left the earth? (If you're under 50 – you've probably never heard of it).

We had a guest speaker once who had to do “rapture practise” in Sunday School. There are others who have never heard of the rapture.





What do you think Jesus' intent is here? Do you think He is trying to scare us? Is that why He is using language like a thief in the night? Is that why He's reminding us of the suddenness of the flood, where people who had not paid attention to Noah preaching repentance perished?

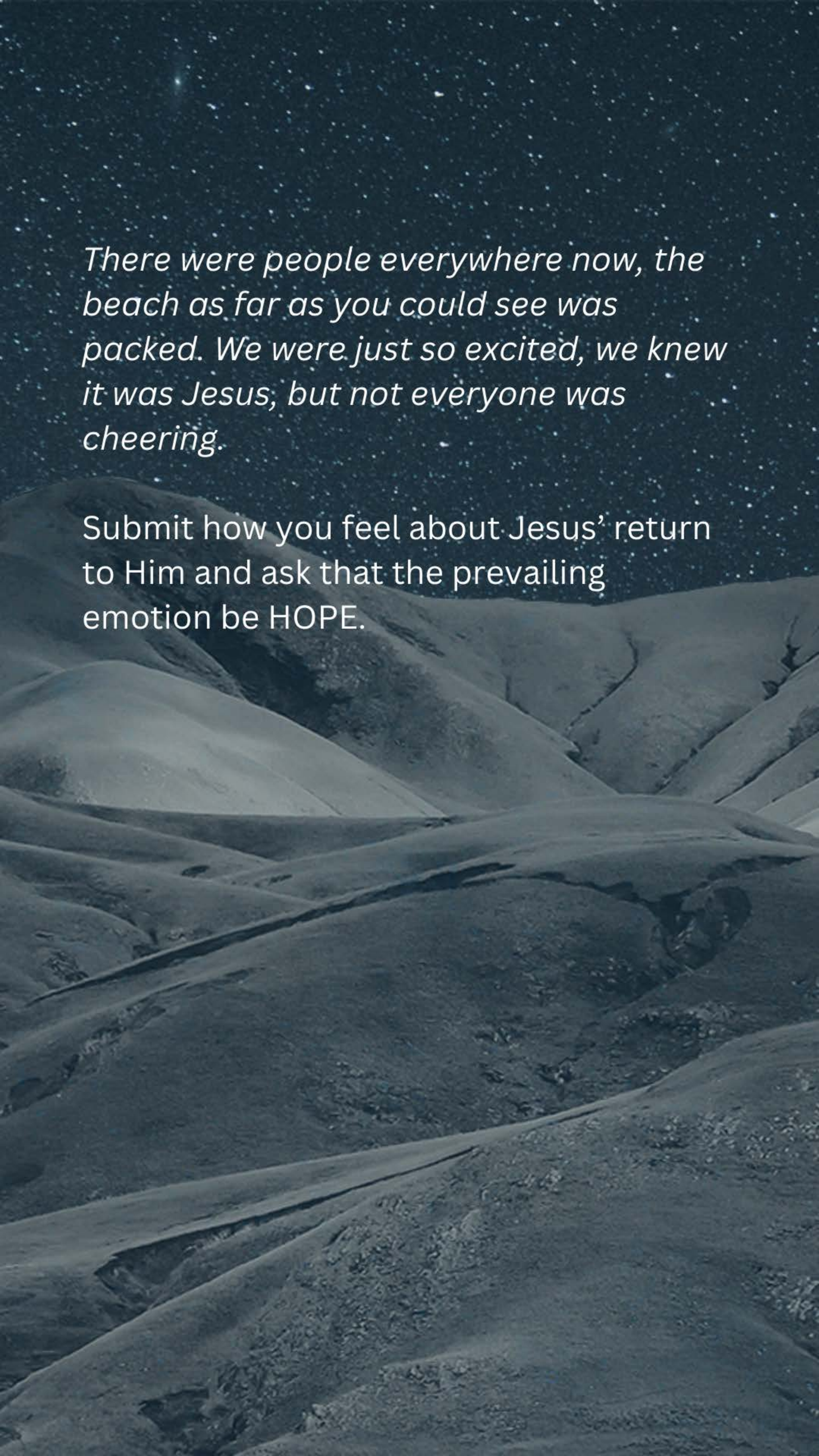
Nothing about Jesus is consistent with using fear for motivation. So then, He is wanting to warn us. To tell us to make sure we are prepared.

Lachie had a dream when he was 14:

*We were on the beach, a bunch of us teenagers. All of a sudden there was this massive, deafening bang, like a thunderclap. I looked around and I was thinking "IT'S HAPPENING!" I looked at Zac and we looked at each other so pumped, and then a figure came down from the sky to the headland - a light poured out of his chest. Zac yelled out "YEAHHHH!" and the beach erupted like the loudest stadium you can imagine.*





The image features a dark, starry night sky at the top, transitioning into a dark, textured landscape that resembles sand dunes or a desert. The text is overlaid on the sky portion.

*There were people everywhere now, the beach as far as you could see was packed. We were just so excited, we knew it was Jesus, but not everyone was cheering.*

Submit how you feel about Jesus' return to Him and ask that the prevailing emotion be HOPE.



## Day 5

Welcome to day 5 of our journey ...

Today's reading is **Psalm 11**

The Psalmist affirms God's goodness and rule here. People's advice is "in the midst of such crazy and evil, your uprightness won't make any difference, so you may as well get out of here!" But the Psalmist has full faith that God is still in control, still working His plan. That one day, His justice will prevail.

We deserved justice, but Jesus took our just punishment. We got mercy instead. Today, let's thank God for His mercy that enables us to look to a future day where there is an end to wickedness, not with fear, but with anticipation. With HOPE.