

## Devotion, Week of May 10, 2026 – Sixth Week of Eastertide

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The word *yare* in Hebrew means fear. It appears almost 400 times in the Hebrew Bible. Over 80 times, the Bible specifically uses this word to “fear God” or “fear the Lord.” Many commentators say that this just means respecting or revering God. And many times that seems to be the case. However, there are other times when fearing God means just that – to be afraid. But sometimes we don’t want to think about the God who does in fact make us afraid. However, God often appears to hold us accountable. Think of Jacob wrestling with God at the Jabbok River. God actually dislocates his thigh. Or God appearing in the smoke and fire on the mountain at Sinai. Or even when God appears when Jesus is on the mountain and says, “This is my beloved Son. LISTEN to Him!”

In our American Christian culture, we tend to want God to be the benevolent father figure up there in the heavenly stratosphere who wants to soothe us and make us better, like a mother taking care of us when we’re sick. We want God to make the bad stuff go away and give us a lollipop as consolation. But God isn’t like that much of the time. God’s trying to deal with the horrible way we treat each other. We have become a nation of rude, nasty people, and nowadays we get by with hate speech and insults on TV and mass media. Statements that would have been kept off of media 20 years ago or made us liable for slander just get published with impunity. We have become mean and cruel to others, especially those we disagree with. We’ve forgotten how to be polite or to have discussions without personally attacking the other. And then the minute we stub a toe or get a cold, we whine and complain and wait for that heavenly lollipop to fix us, because, after all, we are entitled.

Our culture has lost the reverence and awe that God deserves in favor of using God as a crutch when we feel persecuted. Even in our churches, we at times demean those who don’t agree with us. We need to come back to not only the fear of God, meaning respect and reverence, but being afraid of the omnipresent creator who at times needs to take us to the woodshed. We need to be like Job when we’ve sinned, cowering in fear of God’s power and repenting in dust and ashes.

*Jeanne*