

Easter Devotional During “Social Distancing”

The following provides a daily meditation for this season of “social distancing.” As we’ve entered the Season of Easter, may these readings draw us closer to the Reason for our being, Jesus the Christ. Though we worship “apart,” may we journey “together” into the new life that Christ our King has won for us. Let the Spirit of the Risen One lead you into God’s own heart, that we may live out Easter’s victory now and always.

First Week of Easter

Monday, April 13

Read: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Reflection:

The Resurrection reminds us that God alone has final say over the endings to our stories. Everyone thought Jesus’ story had ended on Good Friday, but Easter Sunday signaled a whole new world, a new creation, not only for Jesus, but for all of us. “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone” (v. 22). This pandemic we’re weathering has thrown all certainties up in the air – any control we may have believed in now seems lost. Yet Resurrection is always God’s final word – *life, and not death*.

As we live out our daily stories, let’s write them on Christ our Cornerstone – trusting that his life will narrate our own. No virus, no pain, no loss can ever have the last word on our stories. Easter Sunday may be over, but now it’s Easter Monday – the gift of life that Jesus brings us is available *every day*. Yet it is to us to embrace that gift, and declare: “This *is* the day that the LORD has made; let us *rejoice* and be *glad* in it” (v. 24).

Prayer: *Giver of Life, my story may have many triumphs and trials, twists and turns; no matter what chapter I’m in, may Jesus’ life transform my own. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 14

Read: Colossians 3:12-17

Reflection:

You know the feeling of freshly-cleaned clothes? That warm, fresh scent and texture almost makes the *wearer* feel “brand new.” The writer of Colossians exhorts us to “clothe” ourselves with the marks of God’s Kingdom: “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (v. 12). In other words, put on your “Easter clothes” – put on the new life Jesus has given us!

In the same way wearing clean clothes (or maybe a brand-new outfit) makes us feel confident and fresh, when we live out the attitude and actions of Jesus, we are *living* Easter. We are *living* the gift of eternal life *now*. Notice how such “internal” transformation takes shape externally – what Jesus has done for us can’t be kept in our “closets.” It has to be worn, lived, exhibited.

Don’t let those “Easter clothes” hang unused on the rack. Take them off the laundry line, put them on, and live Easter *now*. Live in the love and forgiveness Jesus showed us in his living and dying, and, through our own acts of mercy and compassion, we shall “rise” to Jesus’ new life.

Prayer: *God, You’ve made me clean through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Help me wear that gift daily in how I live – how I love others and give thanks to You. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 15

Read: Joshua 3:1-17

Reflection:

One may think that the Old Testament has very little to do with “Easter” – but the God that led Israel from Egypt is the *same God* that led Jesus to Jerusalem and through the tomb. What I like about “looking back” on Israel’s adventures with God is that it brings up the “mobility” of the LORD. God rarely “stays put” – and God’s people are called to follow suit.

God swore to lead Israel into the “promised land,” but to do that, they had to cross some boundaries – first the Red Sea, then the wilderness, and now the Jordan River. At this boundary, Israel had to put their feet in “first” before God’s power would be revealed. I think that’s true of following Jesus today. New life *is* always available, but there are times when we have to take the first step. God doesn’t stay put, and neither can we. Even in isolation and social distance, the journey of discipleship remains for us to follow. *We* may be comfortable standing at the borders of “promise,” but *God* has a whole lot more to offer on the other side.

This kind of faith is certainly risky, but it’s the only one Jesus called us to.

Prayer: *Onwards we journey after You, O God – whether we have to dip our toes in the water before Your wonders take place, or You’re already leading us by the hand in grace – we are grateful to belong to You. Amen.*

Thursday, April 16

Read: Colossians 4:2-5

Reflection:

What would it look like to devote ourselves to prayer in this season? What would it mean for us to commit ourselves to praying, not only for our own concerns, but the welfare of others, the whole world? What if we prayed not only in words, but in action – we were so committed to joining God’s Spirit at work in the world that we opened ourselves up to being conduits of grace.

There’s a reason that the writer to the Colossians exhorts their readers to pray. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, one of the very first lines was: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, *on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10). We are praying for God to work *in* us, *through* us – for God’s presence to take up residence in our lives and make something happen!

There can be no greater door-opener than asking God to *use us* for the Kingdom. We just have to be prepared for whatever adventure may unfold.

Prayer: *LORD, Your Spirit is a wonderful mystery, but I’m willing to let this mystery have its way in my life if it means I can be of use to Your Good News. Amen.*

Friday, April 17

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Reflection:

Paul knows the Gospel not just because of some second-hand accounts, but because the Risen Jesus actually appeared to him and gave him this mission personally. I’m sure in these times all of us would love the Risen Jesus to appear and bolster us for this season.

Yet the beautiful thing about this passage is that Paul reflects on why *he* was chosen – “the grace of God” (v. 10). It’s *not* because Paul had such fantastic learning – it’s *not* because he was adept at language or travel. He wasn’t chosen because he had a wealth of resources at his disposal. It was God’s grace *alone* that Paul was called to carry Good News to the world.

All of us are chosen – not for any outstanding qualities that we may have, but simply because God intends to use *us* to transform the world. That’s humbling. Especially now when we’re so reduced as to what we can do in terms of work, recreation, even service. Perhaps it’s enough that *by* grace each of us is part of Jesus’ new life. Each of us has a role in the great proclamation of Jesus to the world. We don’t have to be “superhuman” right now – we just have to be “us.”

Prayer: *By grace, You bring us life, O God. By grace, we can be who You make us to be, and live this Good News. Amen.*

Saturday, April 18

There are no texts for today. Instead, practice a true “Sabbath” and rest in the knowledge that You are loved by the God of the universe. Be true to that, and cease striving for anything else.

Prayer: *Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, for You are good, and Your steadfast love endures forever. Amen.*

Sunday, April 19 – Virtual Worship: 10:30 a.m. – “Second Sunday of Easter”

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual Sunday worship: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-955487> Or, use this for your own discipleship.

Call to Worship

Leader: By God’s great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Help us to live this new life, proclaiming boldly the Risen King.

All: May we go forth in the strength and love of God, the grace of Jesus the Son, and the eternal communion of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 16; Matthew 28:16-20

- What do you think about Scripture intentionally pointing out that while some disciples worshiped the Risen Jesus, others doubted right then and there?
- Jesus immediately sets the disciples to action – does following Jesus involve a “mobile” life – can our discipleship ever be considered “passive?”
- What kind of a message is Jesus’ final charge to the disciples that he ends with reminding them of his presence? Are we “alone” in our discipleship?

Lord’s Prayer *(or free prayer if you choose)*

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name,
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.*

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below; praise Him above ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Risen One, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you now and forever. Amen.