

Easter Devotional During “Social Distancing”

The following provides a daily meditation for this season of “social distancing.” As we celebrate 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.

Second Week of Easter

Monday, April 20

Read: Psalm 114

Reflection:

The Exodus serves as the foundation to the collective memory of Israel because it revealed God’s salvation being rooted *in* history and *within* the socio-political settings of those being acted upon. Salvation for Israel was not an “other-worldly” experience – God’s grace *met* them in their surroundings. The same can be said for the Resurrection.

Though we often give Jesus’ Resurrection an “end of time” or “end of life” value – like the Exodus, God has acted *in* time *for* humanity. The Resurrection was not thought of immediately as a future-oriented event; rather, the disciples understood it being God’s power revealed in their *present* – the gift of God’s future new creation breaking *into* the current time.

Easter has the power to transform our current circumstances with God’s future new creation. The Risen Jesus still bears his scars of crucifixion, but they no longer have power over him. How can God’s power transform our current scars where they no longer have power over us? How does the “exodus” of Jesus’ life reshape ours where *we* become “God’s sanctuary” (v. 2)?

Prayer: *Victorious God, as You liberated Israel from Egypt, You have rescued humanity from death’s curse in Jesus. May this new creation transform our present and empower us to proclaim Your power. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 21

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:19-28

Reflection:

Why should we care about the earth? Why strive so hard to make sure people are afforded a living wage? What does it matter if people have access to basic human needs? The Resurrection answers all of these concerns. In the beginning, God made life and called it “good” (Genesis 1:31). For the sake of that same life, that same creation, God has created a future where all things shall be “re-made” – where “God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Because of the Resurrection, our care for the earth *matters*. Because of the Resurrection, basic human dignity and self-worth *matter*. Because of the Resurrection, facing the difficult realities of food security, healthcare, war and peace – all the big *and* little questions of life *matter*. When God raised Jesus from death, God signaled to all creation that God would not allow the world to spiral off into oblivion. God would deal with it personally; had, in fact, already begun the process on Easter morning.

So why should the Church be involved in social justice – why should the Church strive for ministries of human need and welfare at all? Because such work is *not* in vain. Such work *is* God’s work – what started with the Resurrection continues on in *us* until God’s Kingdom fully comes. Let’s keep working until all creation “be made alive in Christ” (v. 22).

Prayer: *There are days when it’s hard to keep at the pursuit of Your Kingdom, O God; but, what we do is not in vain. Life matters, because of the New Life You revealed in Christ. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 22

Read: Jonah 2

Reflection:

Early Christian commentators found eerie parallels between the story of Jonah in the belly of the great fish and Christ in the tomb. God is able to draw us from the tomb, from the darkness of our sin, even that “fish belly” of our own pride and selfishness. “You brought my life from the Pit, O LORD my God” (v. 6).

Jonah ran from his call to proclaim repentance to a people he believed to be his enemies. Jesus, however, *succeeded* where Jonah failed. Jesus never shied away from God’s call to proclaim repentance, even to the ones who put him to death. Whether we find ourselves in a pit of despair or a vault of suffering made by our own darkness or the world’s, God can find us and set us free.

What we do “after” being rescued is up to us – may God’s faithfulness sustain us, even if we stumble into a pit now and then.

Prayer: *What I have vowed, I will pay, O God. Deliverance belongs to You, and You alone. Amen.*

Thursday, April 23

Read: 1 Peter 1:8-12

Reflection:

It is certainly difficult to love something or someone we have never “seen” with our own eyes. The writer to this early Christian community understood this issue, addressing people who had never personally experienced Jesus in life, only stories of him *after* his death and resurrection.

Yet what the writer accounted for was people’s experience of Jesus *in* the Christian community. When people shared what they had with those less fortunate, that was the Risen Jesus extending his hand. When people tore down walls of social division and classism, that was Jesus creating a new human family. What the prophets of old had spoken of was taking place *in* the lives of the disciples through the exhibition of Jesus’ love and mercy.

I will testify to “seeing” the Risen Jesus in the countless people who commit themselves to social distancing and tireless efforts in industry and healthcare for the sake of others. We may not see Jesus with our own eyes, but perhaps we can see Him in the ministry of the Church and the goodness of the world. Perhaps through our lived proclamation of Jesus, we can be the cause of “indescribable and glorious joy” (v. 8).

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, may we announce the Good News in our daily service to one another and reveal Jesus in the community Your love creates. Amen.*

Friday, April 24

Read: Isaiah 26:1-4

Reflection:

Often when the prophets spoke of Jerusalem, they were referencing God – the “city” was a symbol of God’s presence. The relationship was symbiotic – when Jerusalem prevailed, God prevailed. Judah’s victory *was* God’s victory. This view became precarious, however, when Judah *lost* – what had happened? Did they do something wrong – was God angry? What happened when the city was under attack and God was nowhere to be found?

Perhaps we’re having similar thoughts during this pandemic. What is God up to? Why is the Church suffering? If you read the prophets more thoroughly, you’ll actually encounter their thought process. They realized that though God did have a special relationship with the people and the city, faithfulness had to run *both* ways. They could not expect their “chosen-ness” to remove them from foolish blunders or immoral behavior. God expected trust and obedience.

The Church is called to discipleship, no matter the circumstances. To “trust in the LORD forever” (v. 4) perhaps means living in a way where that trust is modeled in daily life.

Prayer: *You are our Rock, O God – help us to stand on You instead of our own ways. Amen.*

Saturday, April 25

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 26 – Virtual Worship: 10:30 a.m. – “Third Sunday of Easter”

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual Sunday service:
<https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-756618> Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Living God, for whom no door is closed, no heart is locked, draw us beyond our doubts till we see Christ in one another. Open our eyes to Your Presence and life in this world.

All: Keep us reaching for the Risen One in our neighbors, and may our discipleship proclaim Good News to all. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Luke 24:36-49

Consider Pastor Jeffrey’s sermon, or use the following questions for your own study:

- What do you think about Jesus appearing to the ones who abandoned him?
- Do you feel that Jesus’ message is still “repentance and forgiveness of sins?”
- Are there links between discipleship and “witnessing?” Is being a witness merely reporting experience, or are there further calls to “action?”

Lord’s Prayer (or free prayer)

*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.