

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.

Third Week of Easter

Monday, April 27

Read: Genesis 18:1-14

Reflection:

Are we ever “too old” for God’s promises to take shape in our lives? Is there ever a point where we’re no longer “useful” for ministry? I think the narrative of Abraham and Sarah answers these questions with a resounding “no!” There may be seasons of “reassignment” as physical, emotional and social changes come upon us – but God’s *never* done with us.

The Season of Easter reminds us that not even death, now, halts God’s work in our lives. Death is simply the end of one chapter and the beginning of a far more mysterious and wondrous one. When the Spirit knocks on our door, what is our response going to be? Will our wonder become disbelief and therefore disinterest? Or can God’s Holy Surprise open us to joyful reception of new creation right in the middle of the old?

We may laugh and shake our heads, but let’s not close ourselves off to God’s continual power forever. God always gets the last word – and we can trust it’s Resurrection, and not the Cross.

Prayer: *When Your Spirit calls, O God, may my disbelief and awe not become fearful distancing, but open my heart to receive Your promises. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 28

Read: 1 Peter 1:23-25

Reflection:

I think the pandemic has brought our mortality into a renewed perspective. Seeing our society stumble to a halt in order to protect lives certainly makes one consider how precious and fragile human life really is. Though creation is finite, the One who holds it all together is *not*.

“God’s words create the world,” Tom Boogaart, my professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, would often say to me. In Jesus, God has spoken the ultimate word – the Living Word, God “made flesh” for us. Creation may ebb and flow, but this Word of God that has come to deliver us will stand firm. What precious hope that is, even in the wake of this pandemic, that we are part of that everlasting Word.

As our text reads, *we* “have been born anew, not of perishable but imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (v. 23). God’s Living Word has created a new world – where creation shall live on in God’s everlasting light. Through Jesus, we’ve been born into that future.

Prayer: *Word of God, as You have created me anew, may Your future shine through my life into the present to remind all creation of its great hope. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 29

Read: Exodus 24:1-11

Reflection:

In the Old Testament world, blood was a sign of life – it was sacred. Covenants, or promises, were sealed by animal sacrifice to bind persons together through commitment over *life*. As violent a scene as it depicts, there’s beauty in it, too, I think. Moses dashes blood upon the people reminding them their commitment to God must be *total*, because that is what God was committing to them. Though the whole earth belongs to God, God would be *their* King.

It’s no surprise early Christians came back to these texts and stories and found in them similarities to what had happened with Jesus. Jesus’ blood upon the cross was understood through the lens of blood of the covenant. When Jesus told the disciples, “This cup...is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20), they now realized Jesus was reclaiming God’s covenant with Israel and offering a new promise of God’s presence and power with them.

Our commitment to God remains total, because in Jesus, we see what complete self-giving and offering of life truly look like. “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient” (Exodus 24:7).

Prayer: *May the Lamb of God’s blood on the Cross seal Your promises upon my life forever, and commit me to total service in light of Your love. Amen.*

Thursday, April 30

Read: Psalm 23

Reflection:

What *can't* I say about this psalm – it is one of the most well-known, well-loved portions of text, not only in the Bible, but perhaps all of literature. The comfort it breathes for believers and nonbelievers – the image of “The Good Shepherd” is overpowering.

Here's what I'm taking away in this season of pandemic – God is *with* us. God is with us *in* the presence of our “enemies” – God is *with us* in the darkest valley. God is with us, calling to us, leading us, working perhaps “out of sight,” but never out of our minds and hearts. The psalmist portrays God as a shepherd leading us “sheep” into goodness.

God's shepherding doesn't mean we will avoid life's pitfalls – but God walks with us *through* them. This season may be our “valley of the shadow of death,” but God is with us, and for me, that is comfort enough.

Prayer: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me as I follow You, O LORD. May life's trials not diminish my thanksgiving for the overflowing of my cup. Amen.*

Friday, May 1

Read: 1 Peter 2:9-12

Reflection:

We all want to be “special,” right? We want to be valued and appreciated – perhaps not in a way that puts others down, but certainly lifts *us* up. This isn't necessarily bad – so long as we're honest that such longing exists. What I like about this portion of text is that it reminds the Church what being “special” actually entails: *mission*.

“You are a chosen race...*in order that* you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (v. 9). God's “election” of Israel, and subsequently, the Church, is not a matter of choosing some and not others. It's choosing some *for* others – it's a *responsibility*. Our number has been called up and we've been drafted into God's Kingdom community to make the gift of that communion known to all the world.

The Church's “value” does not come from *us*, but from God, so that we may serve others and welcome them into that same value. Especially during a season where everyone is watching one another so carefully, we need to make sure our actions highlight God's light and mercy that “they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God” (v. 12)

Prayer: *Use Your Church, O God, to point the way to Your hope. May we be instruments of peace, symbols of love, and messengers of joy. Amen.*

Saturday, May 2

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, May 3 – Virtual Worship: 10:30 a.m. – “Fourth Sunday of Easter”

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual Sunday worship:
<https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-646682> Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Gracious God, Your Son made himself known to the disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith that we may see Christ in his redeeming work in us and in the world.

All: Reveal Your love in our discipleship that our worship may proclaim Your Good News with joy and thanksgiving. Amen.

Reflection: Luke 24:13-35

The Lord’s Supper (Feel free to use the elements available in your own home, bread and grape juice [or wine] – and follow along in the words of Institution)

The Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, he was with the disciples. And he took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, broken for you.” In the same manner, after they had supped, he took the cup, and after blessing it, he gave it to them, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink of it, in remembrance of me.”

The bread that we break is our communion with the Body of Christ. The cup of blessing which we drink is our communion with the Blood of Christ. These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

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.