

Holy Week Devotional During “Social Distancing”

The following provides a daily meditation for this season of “social distancing.” As we’ve entered the pinnacle of our faith, Holy Week, may these readings draw us closer to the Reason for our being, Jesus the Christ. Though we worship “apart,” may we journey “together” into Christ’s passion, his final exhortations to his disciples, and his ultimate acts of self-giving love and faithfulness. 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.

Monday, April 6

Read: John 12:1-11

Reflection:

Has another person’s devotion or discipleship ever made us uncomfortable or envious? I imagine I’m not alone in sharing in Judas’ questioning of Mary’s anointing of Jesus. I think too much is made of Judas’ betrayal, when he is perhaps one of the most accurate portrayals of humanity. We measure ourselves by the expressions of others, to our own detriment.

When someone raises their hands during worship, do our hands itch at our sides? When someone utters an “amen” after a preacher’s words, do our tongues click in our mouths? Instead of being so conscious as to how others are expressing themselves, maybe we should focus more on *our discipleship*. When Jesus told the disciples that they’d always have the poor with them, I don’t think he was making a statement on social policy. I think he was reminding them that their faith was centered on *him* – not what others do or don’t do.

In this season of social distance, we don’t have a lot else to look at other than ourselves. Maybe we’ll discover anew our discipleship, and how we can fill our lives with the “fragrance” of renewed faith in Jesus.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, turn my eyes from longing gazes toward others and turn them ever longingly to You. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 7

Read: John 12:20-36

Reflection:

This section of John’s Gospel marks a key revealing of God’s self-giving love in Jesus: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (v. 24). We rarely think of dying or death as victory, yet the paradox of our faith is that *through* death, we actually find life. Jesus was willing to face the wrath of the Roman

Empire for his declaration of God's Kingdom – and God made his life such that death would not be the “end” of that proclamation. Through the Cross, Resurrection is found.

This season has certainly presented a “cross” to the world – everyone is dealing with the burden of the coronavirus pandemic. Yet as Jesus showed us God's love in his sacrifice, are we able to “give up” for that same Kingdom? Are we willing to risk our comforts, our routines, our “normalcy” to preserve life, protect it in the most vulnerable, and reveal God's love?

It's a real loss not to have our holiest celebrations together; to have school, jobs, and plans simply thrown into the air without any certainty. Yet such loss does not have to be defeat – if we *embrace* the difficulty, stay home, isolate and practice social distance – we can do as Jesus did. We can love our neighbors, save lives, and *beat* this virus. What a “resurrection” that would be – imagine the “new life” God will produce from such victory.

Prayer: Risen One, help us to be willing to “lose” so that Your victory may win out over all darkness. In Your light, may we be light. Amen.

Wednesday, April 8

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3

Reflection:

As “distanced” as we are from one another right now, we can never lose sight of the “great cloud of witnesses” (v. 1) – the “communion of saints” surrounds God's people, not only in worship, but in life. As we draw close to the height of our holy remembrance, we walk in the footsteps of countless saints who have gone before us. From theological giants and ministry leaders to the everyday servants who followed Christ in the simplicity of loving God and neighbor “behind the scenes.” The Church never journeys alone.

I take such comfort from thinking about the grandparents who raised me, who taught me who Jesus was, walking with me. As we approach the Cross, I'm humbled by sisters and brothers around the world and throughout time, kneeling in its shadow together. Beyond this “cloud” stands the One who connects us all with His blood and Spirit. And that may be the greatest comfort, that our Savior and Lord is no stranger to trial, to the sorrows and joys of human life.

“The pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (v. 2) – Jesus has gone before us to show us the Way, and he continues to stay by our sides to lead us in discipleship. Truly, we are never alone.

Prayer: Stay by my side, Jesus, so that I may not grow weary and lose heart. Amen.

Thursday, April 9 - “Maundy Thursday” – Virtual Worship: 7 p.m.

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual service celebrating Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples: <https://boxcast.tv/view/maundy-thursday-154728>

Call to Worship

Leader: Holy God, we worship in the gathering shadows of Jesus’ suffering and death, joining with disciples from every generation and place, to live again this story of service and love.

All: We come in weakness, looking to Christ to sustain us through darkness with light and love. We come with courage, longing to witness God’s promise become life. Amen.

Reflection: John 13:1-5, 12-17, 31b-35

The Lord’s Supper

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.

Closing Prayer

God of love, we see Your glory in the face of Jesus, who offered himself in humble service to his disciples, even on the night he was betrayed. Shine now in our hearts, as we love one another, in Christlike acts of service and fellowship. We are eager to reflect the glory of Christ, our source of hope and life, our Teacher and Lord, who laid down his life so that we might truly live. Amen.

Friday, April 10 - “Good Friday” – Virtual Worship: Noon

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual service reflecting on Jesus’ final hours: <https://boxcast.tv/view/good-friday-872648>

Call to Worship

Leader: Today the carpenter’s hands are nailed to a cross; the King of kings is crowned with thorns. Today Jesus wears the purple robe of mockery; His dying breath is ridiculed by crowds.

All: Yet we believe Jesus sets us free, though he himself was tried as a criminal. His death will not be defeat; God’s victory is on the horizon.

Reflection: John 19:1-6, 15-18, 28-30

Closing Prayer: *Merciful God, we meet each other at the foot of the cross. We wait together, in shared brokenness and hope, leaning into the vast mystery of God’s love. Though darkness may shroud our hearts this day, we look to the coming dawn. We are waiting for the LORD. Amen.*

Saturday, April 11 - “Holy Saturday”

Today is a “silent” holy day – the space between Good Friday and Easter. Sit with the disciples in their unknowing and uncertainty: they had *no* idea Jesus would rise again. They believed God had abandoned them – that all was lost. In sitting with these feelings, we open ourselves to the reality that God *is* working, even when we know it not. God is doing something “behind the tomb.” Holy Saturday’s silence reminds us that God’s power is revealed not only in the whirlwind and mighty flame, but the still, small voice. Practice a true “Sabbath” today and rest in the knowledge that you are loved by the God of the universe, even though all we may experience is “silence.” Be true to that, and cease striving for anything else. Easter *is* coming.

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

Sunday, April 12 – “Easter Sunday” – Virtual Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual service celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-517047>

Call to Worship

Leader: Alleluia! Christ is risen! Praise God for this gift of new life and hope, for in raising Jesus from death, God has claimed us as God’s own. Christ is Lord today and forever!

All: Alleluia! God has brought us from darkness to light. Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed!

Reflection: Matthew 28:1-10

Easter Prayer

Leader: As Christ burst forth from the tomb, may new life burst forth from us and show itself in acts of love and healing to a hurting world.

All: May that same Christ, who lives forever, keep our hearts rejoicing always. Amen.

Lord’s 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.