

## **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.*

### **Sixth Week of Easter**

#### **Monday, May 18**

Read: Psalm 93

Reflection:

It can feel strange calling God “king” when none of us have any experience as to what that title means. Our democratic context gives us dislike for such absolutist terms – nobody rules us but our own consciences and inalienable rights. Yet if we take a step back for a moment and think about the writers’ context – their experiences with kings was no kinder than our own experience with cruel world leaders today.

But to say “God is king” was an affirmation that in God, Israel had a true *leader* – One who cared for the people in a way no earthly ruler ever could. This Divine LORD was not only master over *all* the peoples of the world, but the universe itself! The greatest marvel was not in God’s “all-powerful” being, but that this King *loved* their people. This King loves *us*.

At a time when we may disagree or disapprove of our own leaders, let’s remember that beyond our human institutions stands One whose power is focused on *us*. The Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of all things stands eternally *for us*, and that kind of “king” deserves our praise daily.

Prayer: *To You, O Holy One, we sing – not because You demand it, but because Your love gives us life. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, May 19**

Read: Genesis 9:8-17

Reflection:

Our Jewish siblings in faith elaborated on this passage in that through this “Noahic Covenant,” God established a universal relationship of goodwill with *all* creation. Christian commentators

followed suit and developed several theologies of the kind from this promise, but what I focus on is God's maintenance of memory. There're many storybook versions of this text where we lift up the rainbow as a sign that God will never again destroy the earth – but the text actually points to it reminding *God* of God's promise.

“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth” (v. 17). It's quite easy for us to forget God made a promise with *everyone and everything* – maybe that's why God established a sign of remembrance. If God can “forget” that God's promises extend to all creation, then certainly *we*'ll have difficulty remembering that our “neighbor” across lines of race, politics, gender, religion, etc. *share* in that covenant.

Perhaps this pandemic is a “rainbow” moment – we need to remember God has not only promised to never again “destroy,” but God has made that promise with *all*. The “new creation” of Easter, therefore, is a gift that can be shared with everyone and everything – no physical distancing or human category can keep out that hope for restoration.

Prayer: *God of promise, as You remember Your boundless love, may my actions share in that maintenance of memory, to the glory of Your Name. Amen.*

## Wednesday, May 20

Read: Deuteronomy 31:1-8

Reflection:

Are we actively preparing for those who will “come after” us? Not only in the sense of our congregation but those who will live in this *community*? What about future generations who will inhabit the planet? Moses, the great leader of Israel, had a *limit* on his ministry. None of us are called to serve in the same capacity for *all* time. As we live out our own faith journeys, we help pass the baton of leadership onto others, preparing the next generation for the future.

This text shows us one example of such preparation done in “courageous compassion.” Moses encourages the people that God will be with them, even when one leader steps aside. It can be fearful when we've seen gaps in generational ministry – when congregations look far older than they do younger. Yet Moses' charge to Joshua was to “be courageous” – to remember that God was *with* them, ages notwithstanding.

In light of such courageous compassion concerning the future, maybe we need to continue raising up leaders by encouraging them to take “the reins” of the Church for *God's* future, and not ours. Especially when we take notice of our “limits,” we'll realize it was never “our” future anyway – it belongs solely to the God of all generations.

Prayer: *God, sometimes we've held onto the leadership baton for so long, we don't expect anyone to be there if our grip loosens. Yet You are always there – help us to trust in that, and loosen the reins on Your future. Amen.*

## Thursday, May 21

Read: Acts 1:1-11

Reflection:

Today is “Ascension Day” – traditionally celebrating Jesus’ ascension into heaven six weeks’ after His Resurrection. The Ascension provides some confusion for modern Christians – often Jesus’ Resurrection gets mixed in with “ascending into heaven” as if His defeat of death was a straight shot into “the clouds.” Yet the early Church made sure the two events were *distinct*.

The Ascension is *not* the Risen Jesus’ “escape” from earth – it is the shift of focus from Christ *to* His Body, the Church, *us*. Jesus “ascends” into heaven, or the space of God, because heaven was “over” the physical creation. Because heaven was God’s space, it was the “true reality” – that’s why Jesus prayed “Your Kingdom come *on earth as it is in heaven*” – essentially saying: may the true picture take shape *here and now*. For Jesus to “ascend” meant He had taken his rightful place as the Lord of *all* creation.

Like the beauty of gravity, “what goes up, must come down” – the Risen Jesus is coming back, bringing heaven *to* earth in that final picture of the Kingdom fully come. So, while we stand between Resurrection and Return, we’ve got work to do. “Why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you...will come in the same way” (v. 11).

Prayer: *LORD of all, keep our eyes on the ground in front of us and the world around us, because You are coming back. What You created, You will restore – and You’ve called us to be part of the project. Amen.*

## Friday, May 22

Read: Ephesians 2:1-7

Reflection:

The journey with Christ is always one from death to life – it is a continual movement from sin and darkness to light and freedom in God’s Kingdom. This definition of grace that “God, who is rich in mercy...even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (v. 4-5) may be a *daily* experience.

When we wake each day, God is already there reaching out to us in love – we did not have to earn it; it was not extended because of any human quantifiers or categories of merit. It is God’s *gift*. Viewed through the lens of gratitude, grace becomes the great activator of discipleship. We were once considered “dead,” but God has brought us *life* – let’s *truly* live that gift!

If there was ever a season where “new life” needed to be exhibited to the world, it’s now.

Prayer: *The grave is no bar to Your call, O LORD. Today is Your day, and we rejoice! Amen.*

## Saturday, May 23

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 24 – Virtual Worship: 10:30 a.m. – “Seventh Sunday of Easter”

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual Sunday worship:  
<https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-973167> Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: O God, Your Son, Jesus, prayed for His disciples, and sent them into the world to proclaim Your Kingdom. By Your Spirit, hold Your Church in unity to Christ’s witness.

**All: Keep us faithful to Your Word, that our discipleship may be true, giving of ourselves as Christ gave, in faith, service and love. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Psalm 68:1-10; 1 Peter 3:8-16

*Whether you join for virtual worship or study on your own, consider these questions:*

- Does not repaying “evil for evil” seem like a “sacrifice?”
- What kind of a witness is the “gentleness and reverence” of living according to Jesus?
- How does love “bless” those with whom we may disagree or struggle against? Is such a form of discipleship possible in our world?

### 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.**