

Pentecost Devotional During “Social Distancing”

The following provides a daily meditation for this season of “social distancing.” As we celebrate the Season of Pentecost, may these readings draw us closer to the Spirit of the Living God, who dwells with us always. Though we worship “apart,” may we journey “together” into the new life that Christ has brought us and the Holy Spirit continually imparts to us. Now is the season for the Church to come “alive” with the Spirit’s power at home and in our daily lives.

Fourth Week of Pentecost

Monday, June 22

Read: Psalm 86:11-17

Reflection:

What does an “undivided heart” look like when it comes to our relationship with God? Is it equated with our devotional life or the number of religious commitments on our calendars? Can it be reflected in our years of attending worship services or how many leadership roles we’ve served in the congregation?

Perhaps what this psalm is hinting at, is not so much the “what” – but the “how.” The writer prays for an undivided heart, because they wish to have such communion with God, that even in the face of life’s hardships, their identity as a child of God will outshine all else. The sense of grounded-ness in *God’s* love, *God’s* faithfulness, may produce in us a life thoroughly shaped by that goodness to the extent that we share those gifts with others.

Maybe what this prayer amounts to is the awareness that God’s compassion is not merely a principle or a belief – it’s a lived reality we can enter into daily.

Prayer: Great is Your love, O God – may I live always in light of that grace, that when I run up against difficulty, I will trust even there Your compassion is unfailing. Amen.

Tuesday, June 23

Read: Psalm 6

Reflection:

I take great comfort in that the writers of the Bible were not shy with their emotions. So much of Scripture, particularly the psalms, are a product of *raw*, human expression. Sometimes, we may

feel like “church” is a place for picture-perfect lives – that because God is so good, we’re not allowed to reflect any “bad” if we’re faithful disciples.

Yet again and again, we read such laments like this one – an honest cry of pain and hardship, a reaching out to God with weak arms and feeble knees, just inching towards the hope that God may hear and act. The vast spectrum of human experience that the Bible references should be a comfort to us that no emotion, no expression, is “off limits” to God. Our God sees and hears *all*.

Though there’s no “roadmap” for living in light of a global pandemic – there is the gift of writers like the psalmist to show us that God does not turn away from our deepest pain.

Prayer: *LORD, I’m sure many of us have reached our breaking points over this season – we’ve wanted to scream and shout, broken down in tears – reacted strongly over the Internet or with our neighbors. Yet You abide with us, and remain open to all that we are and do. Thank You. Amen.*

Wednesday, June 24

Read: Matthew 10:5-23

Reflection:

It’s interesting to think of Jesus sending out The Twelve in such a state of *dependence*. They were to rely on the hospitality of strangers, and when it came to proclaiming the Kingdom of God – it was not *their* power or presence, but the Spirit of the LORD. Maybe you’re like me and think that God needs me to be “put together” before I can *really* serve – but if that wasn’t the case with the disciples, why should it be any different with us?

Who told or taught us that only when we are “able” to serve *can* we serve – it doesn’t look like it was Jesus, and it certainly never seems to stop God’s call. Perhaps the only prerequisite is the *sending* itself – and if we consider ourselves disciples, then we *are* those who are being “sent.” There is risk involved in this calling, but again, Jesus told the disciples that their dependence was not on themselves, but the One who sent them.

There’s another aspect to this call – the Twelve were sent *together* – not only could they depend on their faithful master, Jesus, but they would have to be willing to depend on one another. Faith is not a solitary mission: Church is a *community*.

Prayer: *It’s scary to be a sheep in the midst of wolves, LORD, but help me remember that I belong to the Gracious Shepherd. Amen.*

Thursday, June 25

Read: Micah 7:18-20

Reflection:

The prophets, for all their supposed “doom and gloom,” had incredible insight into the heart of God: “Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives...transgression” (v. 18). At a time when the greatest sin of the people was apathy, the prophets portrayed the divine *empathy* – that though Israel neglected its Creator and Redeemer, God was incapable of returning such ignorance. God’s *love* was always greater than God’s anger.

Perhaps in a season of such continual tension and difficulty – when it feels as if life has become hopeless and filled with only pain, it may be helpful to remember God’s promise: “You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea” (v. 18). God does not *cause* our pain – but God will certainly *remedy* it. God will answer our pain with God’s own love – made known most fully in the Cross, and answered eternally with Resurrection.

May we not turn off our hearts just because life is difficult – may we not scorn our neighbors just because they’re tough to love. God’s love is greater, and for that, we too can try and try again.

Prayer: *You are not the God of second chances, but the LORD of everlasting grace – so when I stumble, remind me to look to You as I rise and try to love once more. Amen.*

Friday, June 26

Read: Luke 17:1-4

Reflection:

I think forgiveness truly becomes “real” with repentance. Saying sorry is an important first step, but the greater step may be what comes *after*. Living differently *after* wrongdoing is the purpose of repentance – to have turned *from* brokenness and *towards* the Kingdom of God. God is gracious and forgiving – calling us into that same sort of redeeming transformation.

The real power in forgiveness is that we are not only forgiven *from* our wrongdoing – but forgiven *for* new life. We are called out of our sin into the new creation of God – to live in this new way, having been freed from the chains of our brokenness. I think that’s why Jesus calls his disciples to be accountable to one another. When we misstep, it’s not the end of the world – grace *can* and *does* abound. But it’s up to us to make forgiveness “count” with repentance.

Saying sorry *matters* – but living like we are sorry, that’s where God’s power takes hold.

Prayer: *No matter how many wrongs I make, God, You are there to forgive. Help make this grace take shape in my life, by leading me to walk in the Way of Your redemption. Help Your Church to show grace to one another, so that we can be true disciples of Your love. Amen.*

Saturday, June 27

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, June 28 – Virtual Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Consider the guided meditation and join Pastor Jeffrey for a virtual Sunday worship:
<https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-887828> *Or, use this for your own at-home worship.*

Call to Worship

Leader: God, You have welcomed all the world into Your heart through Christ in the power of Your Spirit. With such extravagant welcome like that, may we seek to model the invitation to new creation.

All: Pour upon us, O God, the wisdom of Your Spirit, that we may walk with Christ the Way of Love, ready to offer even the gift of our lives, to show forth the hope of Your Kingdom. Amen.

Reflection: Genesis 22:1-14; Matthew 10:40-42

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

- Do you think Abraham believed that God would “provide” or that he truly was prepared to offer up Isaac in sacrifice?
- What does it mean for us to “welcome” in the Name of Jesus? Is it an absolute commitment to open our lives to God’s doing, much like Abraham with Isaac?
- What does radical hospitality look like in this current season? What does radical hospitality look like for FCC?

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.