

## **Daily Devotional During “Social Distancing”**

*The following provides a daily meditation for this season of “social distancing.” Following the Spirit of the Living God into the world, we live in the period known as “Ordinary Time” – the growing space between Pentecost and Advent. 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. May the Church grow ever deeper into the love and hope of God.*

### **“Ordinary Time” (Growing Season)**

#### **Monday, August 3**

Read: Acts 2:37-47

Reflection:

Jesus creates *community*. This is what we see when all the various people gathered in Jerusalem on that Pentecost day long ago experienced Christ’s life through the Holy Spirit. In a season where it may feel like our sense of community is fractured or restricted or just not “the same,” it’s so important to remember that the work of Jesus’s Spirit *sustains* us in such disparity.

It may not look like what we’re used to, but again, the power of Jesus’ life in us makes the impossible “possible.” People who had nothing in common suddenly shared “all things in common” (v. 44). People who had no inkling of hope or grace miraculously experienced in one another “glad and generous hearts” (v. 46). Community is what the Church *does*.

It may not be “together” in a building, but we can certainly be “together” in our ministry of grace and love. We can hold in common the preservation and respect for life, protection of the most vulnerable, and continue to work for God’s Kingdom wherever we may be found.

*Prayer: Lord of life, may Your Spirit fill us so that we devote ourselves to Christ, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers, whether or not we do these things in a sanctuary or out in the street. You make us one, now and always. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, August 4**

Read: Matthew 15:32-39

Reflection:

I think the real miracle of Jesus feeding the four thousand is not so much the multiplication of resources, but that Jesus *sees* and *answers* “need.” It was not just that people were hungry and

needed to be fed – Jesus worried that they would not make it home safe without nourishment. Jesus was able to look beyond immediate concerns to a larger picture – seeing the interconnectedness of people’s lives and the pain and fear that shackled them.

Jesus saw this web of human life and declared “I have compassion for the crowd” (v. 32). Jesus met the limitation of the world with the abundance of his love, offering his own life in the face of scarcity and sorrow. The real miracle with the loaves and fishes is that Jesus takes the things that are so ordinary to us in life – a meal, a conversation, a crowd – and says: “God’s Kingdom is *here*.” The Messiah then turns the mission of nourishment and communion over to *us*.

We may not be asked to feed the hungry or make sure people have what they need to journey safely home, but we certainly are tasked with sharing the abundance of God’s love. Sometimes that may look like actually feeding people and providing rest for the weary. Most times, however, it may look like just seeing the larger picture of people’s lives and offering what blessing *we’ve* been given through God’s Kingdom.

Prayer: *When I see need, O God, may I not try to hold onto what I have, but trust in Your abundant love to offer enough for all. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, August 5**

Read: Romans 1:8-15

Reflection:

Does our thankfulness become *action*? Is our gratitude mere sentiment or does it actually become an *embodied* response in our world? For Paul and the Christian community, their thankfulness to God and for one another led to *tangible acts* – their praise for Christ’s work became their commitment to the *body* of believers.

To “pray” for one another was never just in words of mouth or written upon a page, but a way of *being* in the world that *revealed* the love of Jesus. When we offer prayers as a congregation, we are committing to the Spirit of the LORD, recognizing God is already at work before we ever uttered a word, but we want to *join in* on what God *will* do. In our gratitude for grace, we follow that joy and thanksgiving into the cycle of blessing that is generated through the Holy Spirit.

Maybe all we can do in this season is offer prayers for our neighbors – but how about following that line of gratitude and checking in with those we pray for? Instead of just offering up our voices to the LORD, what if we use those same voices to ask of our sisters and brothers: “How are you? How may I help?”

Prayer: *God, there is a harvest waiting for us all – in our thanksgiving for what You give to us, may we show our gratitude by joining You in the work of reaping righteousness and love in Your world. Amen.*

## Thursday, August 6

Read: Acts 17:10-15

Reflection:

Not everyone is receptive to “good news.” Many times, it has nothing to do with “God,” but because the message of Jesus *disrupts* our comfort levels. The Kingdom of God is *above* all allegiances. That kind of sovereignty dislodges our ideas about economics, politics, even citizenship.

The Gospel doesn’t make us anarchists, but it does make us *disciples* – and disciples can only have *one* Master. Instead of worrying how others will react to God’s message in Jesus, maybe *we* need to listen anew to what God is asking of *us* in this Kingdom. There are no exceptions to love of *enemies* – there is little wiggle room for forgiveness. The fruits of the Spirit are not always as pleasing to the eye as the fruits of this world.

Yet following Jesus is not a solo adventure. When we get into trouble, remember that God welcomes us into a “family” of faith. When a disciple reaches out their hand, there should be another hand ready to take it in friendship, support, or love.

Prayer: *You sent us out two by two for a reason, O God – whether there is joy or hate at our message, it is never just “me” but always “us.” Amen.*

## Friday, August 7

Read: Psalm 85:8-13

Reflection:

The life of God is not acquired but rather *gifted*. God pours out God’s own life for the world to experience – yet it remains the task of faith to seek and embrace this gift. When we open ourselves to God’s life, we open ourselves to interconnectivity and mutuality – we see ourselves as part of the great web of God’s love reaching through *all* things.

If we’re wondering what it looks to embrace this gift, look no further than Jesus. See in his words and actions what total embrace and embodiment of God’s life can be – when the allowance of love and mercy are offered through each and every deed. There’s mystery in this path as well, but we need not fear the unknown – just remember “The LORD will give what is good” (v. 12).

I wonder what our communities would look like if we opened ourselves as Jesus did, instead of trying so hard to procure it through a transactional experience?

Prayer: *Put down our measuring scales and answer books and help us discover the intersection of Your grace and love, O God. Amen.*

## Saturday, August 8

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, August 9 – 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-389234> Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: LORD, we have been waiting for normalcy and the resuming of our routines, yet it seems like we are still far from such comfort. Remind us to wait in You, and trust in Your abiding Presence.

**All: God of All, may our waiting not be absent of discipleship, but actively participating in Your Spirit’s redemption of our world. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Psalm 85:8-13; 1 Kings 19:9-18

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

- Describe a time when you were fearful, and you felt the LORD’s voice/presence sharing reassurance and comfort.
- Each “instance” of power may be described as a *theophany*, a revealing of God, but notice that it’s precisely in the “quiet” where God chooses to address Elijah. How might we be called to find the “quiet” spaces within our own lives?
- God’s call to Elijah does not remove him from the threat of danger, but sends him right back into its midst – God promises *presence* vs. insulation. How might the Church mirror such trust in presence vs. insulation from the 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.**