

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. 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, September 14

Read: Hebrews 11:23-29

Reflection:

The great “faith” chapter of Hebrews 11 is full of *action*. Faith is never separate from deed in this retelling of the story of God’s people. Moses, in this instance, is one who “by faith” joins in the movement of the Kingdom of God rather than remain in the comfort of Egyptian royalty. Faith is not just a matter of belief, it is a commitment to have God’s will transform our own.

The choice between comfort and sacrifice is difficult – none of us enjoy the unknown nor the trial of liberation, but “faith” carries us onward. When we *live* our belief in the love of God, when we *act* on God’s grace, we are making the “invisible” *visible*. Faith becomes *real* when our lives reflect our hearts.

There is a lot we do not “see” when we trust in God, but it is not so much what *we* see, but what the world sees *in* us. Christ called us His Body, God made us “building blocks” of the Kingdom. By *faith*, we reveal these identities to the world. By faith, we show our loyalty to God’s Kingdom over the kingdoms and comforts of “Egypt.”

Prayer: *God of Exodus, help us to follow Your vision of Promise, even through wilderness and sea, trusting in Your Presence to bring our discipleship to life. Amen.*

Tuesday, September 15

Read: Romans 14:13-5:2

Reflection:

How do we work to make sure others are not harmed by *our* discipleship? How do we practice *gracious* difference? The Church exists by unity *in* diversity – not by uniformity or conformity.

The only “conformity” that should be taking place is the power of the Spirit that conforms us deeper into the Presence and power of God. Our discipleship should not stifle or strangle the discipleship of others.

I don’t think of this biblical counsel as “to each their own” or “your truth is your truth; my truth is mine.” Rather, I think it is about how our relationships with Christ should only enable and empower our relationships with others. Our experiences may look different, but they should lead us all into the production of fruit for God’s Kingdom.

Judgment, dissent, and devaluing have no place in the work of the *body*. The Body of Christ, though containing many different parts, must work together in order to offer the “whole” up to God. Let those who “cook,” cook, and those who “eat,” eat, so long as both the one who cooks and the one who eats know that “they” cannot exist without the gifts and purpose of the “other.”

Prayer: *Make us one, O God, so we can together offer up the complete song of praise You have asked all Your creation to sing in joy. Amen.*

Wednesday, September 16

Read: 2 Kings 2:1-18

Reflection:

No one lives, or serves, forever. Eventually, transitions come. Elijah eventually gave way to Elisha. John the Baptist made way for Jesus. Yet the great promise of such narratives is that those who continue on bear the “mantle” of their forebears. Elisha continued Elijah’s ministry, empowered by God’s Spirit. We, who are Christ’s Body, continue the ministry of the Messiah through that *same* Spirit – the very Spirit of Jesus, in fact!

As empowered and equipped as we are through Christ’s Spirit, our ministry does have a season. No matter our gift or ability, there will come a time when we must “pass the mantle” to the next generation. The challenge will be in making sure that the next generation is ready to receive that Spirit openly and wisely, just as Elisha did, asking for a “double portion” (v. 9).

This story is not just how Elisha accepted the mantle, it’s also about how Elijah willingly relinquished it and was swept up into God’s future. There might not be chariots of fire to receive us at our transition, but God will certainly be present. From generation to generation, the Spirit of the LORD abides.

Prayer: *May we bear and share the mantle of ministry with patience, grace, and wisdom – all to the glory of Your Name. Amen.*

Thursday, September 17

Read: Exodus 15:22-27

Reflection:

Sometimes, the “bitter water” we have to drink is our own realization that following God is not a walk-through paradise. Discipleship does not remove from us the pain of life nor the difficulties of human existence. God rescues us from our sin and bondage – God delivers us from our own brokenness and spiritual pain, but God doesn’t make us invincible.

Life is hard, but God’s assurance is that God journeys *with* us. God is not ignorant of our pain – God *feels* it with us. The “water” of human life is often bitter and hard to swallow, but the living water of Jesus takes away our worldly thirst. The waters of the Spirit flow without end, and we need never worry if God can “handle” our thirst for righteousness.

None of this changes the reality of the world’s deserts, but may it be a blessed reminder that our God *is* the God of wilderness. God reigns over sea *and* storm, darkness *and* light – if we search for the waters of God’s Kingdom, we *will* find them. It just might take some walking to get there.

Prayer: *Holy God, as I wander, remind me that You wander with me. Amen.*

Friday, September 18

Read: Exodus 16:1-21

Reflection:

I suffer from “stomach love.” The way to my heart is definitely through my stomach. Food is often my love language, thus my strict routine of exercise to make up for this fact. Israel had “stomach love” too – but it was not just about their human necessities, it was about for “what was.” They *missed* Egypt – because even slavery was a “comfort” compared to the “unknown” of the wilderness.

We take great comfort in the things that appear to give us control. Food, drink, entertainment – these and more we hold close to our hearts because they make us very comfortable. God’s Kingdom involves these things, but more importantly, it makes us relinquish them to *God’s* control and not our own. And that can be scary – it can make us “hunger” for the “good old days,” even though our past bondage is still “bondage.”

Let’s take a note from the New Testament and allow the true “Bread from Heaven,” Jesus, to fulfill our desires and trust that His love is “enough.” God can fill our stomachs with what we truly need – and by doing so, make sure we are never enslaved again.

Prayer: *Feed me with the Bread of Heaven, LORD, that I may hunger only for Your Kingdom. Amen.*

Saturday, September 19

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, September 20 – Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-174840> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: God and Creator of us all, Your love transforms us daily to be people of Your Kingdom. In Your light, we see and live as new creation; we encounter the gift of Your life in our own.

All: Give us wisdom from above, that in serving we fulfill our call, in loving we share Your redemption, and in fellowship we make hope come alive. Amen.

Reflection: Exodus 16:2-15; Matthew 20:1-16

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

- What is the “motivation” for our faith – is it the “reward” of God’s promises or the meaning/purpose of God’s call for us?
- What do you think God’s view of “fairness” is? Does it follow our understanding, or does/should our understanding flow from God’s view?
- Is our concern with what “others” receive compared to our own “earnings?” Why might that concern be misplaced in the eyes of God? How might that distort our true focus?

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.