

## **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, October 26**

Read: Psalm 119:41-48

Reflection:

When the psalmist speaks of “the law” – it is *not* some list of rules. It is not a collection of “do’s” and “don’ts.” It is the *way* of God – it is the path (or paths) that forms one’s self to God’s love and righteousness. The “commandments” are practical application of what one’s life looks like when God’s Way is taken *seriously* – when life is placed in the context of God’s Kingdom versus the world’s.

That kind of formation is *romantic*, according to the psalmist, because such devotion to God brings one into a clearer reality of how dearly *they* are *loved*. To focus in on God’s Kingdom transforms the world we think we know to the one that God rules over in steadfast love.

What would it mean for us to view discipleship in terms of relationship versus discipline? What it would look like to consider devotion to God’s Way as an act of love rather than conformity for fear of punishment? When we live God’s Way out of love rather than “law,” perhaps we’ll experience the “liberty” the psalmist proclaims.

Prayer: *As I form to Your Way, O LORD, may I see clearly the wonders of Your love. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, October 27**

Read: James 2:14-26

Reflection:

What comes first, the chicken or the egg? This seems to be what has become of conversations around “faith” and “works.” Yet when we take the Letter of James in the context of the whole

narrative of Scripture we may understand one as *part* of the other – that truly, there is no work *without* faith nor faith *without* work.

To “believe” is all good and well so long as that belief shows up in how we *live*. Professing our faith in Jesus is not nearly as powerful as making those words come to life in our *deeds*. We can say we love God all day long, but if we’re not loving what God *loves* – then perhaps we’re missing the mark. Perhaps our faith is as the writer declares “dead.”

Our beliefs should *guide* our acts – in fact, what we *do* always flows from what we think/understand. Thus, if we believe in the God of Jesus, the God of love, justice, and peace – then our works will flow from *that* understanding. If we believe in the “god” of Self, Mine, and Only Me, then our works will only concern that very *small* understanding.

Prayer: *If my faith lives in You, O God, then may my actions be full of life – the life that You have given me and all the world. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, October 28**

Read: Matthew 19:16-22

Reflection:

“What good deed must I do to inherit eternal life” someone asks Jesus. Jesus pushes back against this seeker, because it seems that his concern is not truly with the “how” but the “how much.” When Jesus says to “keep the commandments,” again, this person asks, “Which ones?”

We like to know what it is we have to “do” to be “good” with God. We want to know the “secret,” the “answer.” Perhaps there is no “secret,” and Jesus is trying to make it clear that the only thing “hidden” from us is our purpose and value in God’s eyes. Love, because you are already loved. Live, because life has been gifted you and you can honor that gift by sharing it with others.

Unfortunately, this person cannot relinquish their quest for the “hiddenness” of God, maintaining their grip on their possessions for value rather than embracing their “beloved-ness” in God. This text may be less about “giving up” our resources, than giving up our quest for obtaining the “secret” to happiness. God *already* loves us: we have been created *and* redeemed. Now, it is for us to embrace that gift, letting go of any obstacles between our *true selves* and “eternal life.”

Prayer: *Relinquish my grip on divine secrets and hidden values and embrace what You have set before me: life and love, everlasting. Amen.*

## **Thursday, October 29**

Read: Joshua 2:1-14

Reflection:

Rahab is a Canaanite – she is not part of Israel, *and yet*, without her, there would be no fulfillment to God’s promise. This stranger and outsider “sees” the value of God’s Kingdom over and against her own and joins in this promise. Through her sacrifice, Israel is born.

We never know where help will come from. We often are too quick to label what is “of” God and what is “not,” yet to do so may be to miss out on the *expanse* of God’s Kingdom. To limit God’s promise to only the boundaries that *we* declare may be to stifle God’s love in *ourselves* and *the world*.

Be open to surprises. Be ready for God’s promise to already be ahead of you in a place or person before you’ve ever encountered or uttered a word of *your* faith. God is bigger than our borders. God’s Kingdom extends far beyond our own circles, communities, theologies, and thoughts. And that is Good News.

Prayer: *Keep me open to Your Kingdom in the unexpected and unprepared for. Amen.*

## **Friday, October 30**

Read: Matthew 23:13-28

Reflection:

Jesus’ critique was rarely for the “common” people, but almost always for the “religious” community. It was those who had not only the knowledge, but also the responsibility to lead the way in embodying the way of God’s Kingdom that Jesus took issue with *precisely because* they were failing to uphold this call. That’s why it’s so important for the Church to listen carefully to Jesus’ words because *we* would have been the “target” of his challenges.

Hypocrisy cripples the Church because for all our great proclamations and honoring of traditions, are we laying burdens upon others that we ourselves are *not* willing to carry? Are we holding the world up to a high standard that we *ourselves* are failing to honor? Are we preaching a message that we ourselves are not willing to fulfill?

Many people are attracted to Jesus but *not* Christianity because they see in Jesus the authenticity and care they desire whereas the Church seems an irrelevant and hypocritical agency unable and unwilling to care for anyone other than itself. We must always seek to allow Jesus’ critique to call forth a better version of ourselves that we may truly practice what we preach.

Prayer: *May we cease being whitewashed tombs, O LORD, but rather, empty graves that proclaim the Risen One is unleashed in our lives and in the world. Amen.*

## Saturday, October 31

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, November 1 – Worship: 10:30 a.m. – “All Saints Day”

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-121268> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: Eternal God, neither death nor life can separate us from Your love. Grant that we may serve You faithfully now, and one day, rejoice with all those who have gone before.

**All: Sustain us by Resurrection hope, honoring our loved ones in faithful service and trusting in the great cloud of witnesses to journey alongside us always. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Joshua 3:7-17; Psalm 107:1-9, 33-43; Matthew 23:1-12

### Blessing for All Saints

*God of the ages, we praise You for all Your servants, who have done justice, loved mercy, and walked humbly with their God. We praise you for all who have sought Your new creation, and who, by their steadfast faith, have shown their discipleship in Jesus. We praise You for all those we have known and loved, and pray that we, with them, may follow in the Way of Your Kingdom, and, at the last, dwell in Your eternal embrace between heaven and earth.*

### The Lord’s Supper

*The Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, he was with the disciples. 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.**

### 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.**