

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, October 5

Read: Deuteronomy 5:1-21

Reflection:

The Law is never separate from the story of liberation. The “Ten Commandments” flow out of the context of “exodus” – God’s law comes *after* God’s grace. Perhaps instead of seeing the Law as “rules,” we should see them as a “model” for understanding. The Law is a “path” we are invited to further explore God’s rescue of our lives.

Putting the Ten Commandments up on a wall by themselves is actually an unhelpful image because it separates the Law from liberation. It removes the commandments from their context of God’s involvement in rescuing people from slavery. This is a healthy reminder for all of Scripture – don’t separate the “words” from their place in the story.

Jesus is the Word Made Flesh – He is God’s “exodus” in human form, the “way” of the commandments in a life all about grace. Jesus never stood apart from the story of God, but always invited us deeper within it. Perhaps we can learn more about grace by reading the Law as part of the story, and seeing liberation as inseparable from its meaning.

Prayer: *You rescue us, O God, and then invite us to follow You. Help us read rescue right alongside Your commands. Amen.*

Tuesday, October 6

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Reflection:

Being “made new” in Christ is also to help make that “newness” in others. God makes us a “new creation” (v. 17) to participate in God’s “re-creation” of all things. This means that our

“religious” or “spiritual” life is *inseparable* from every other sphere of life. To be made new by the love of God is to offer that newness *to* the rest of the world, and share in the “ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18).

The “old” creation of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, xenophobia – oppressing people due to difference or false societal hierarchies – our “new creation” in Christ compels us to work to *change* these broken structures. The life of Jesus at work in us is also at work in the world to dismantle such brokenness and truly bring redemption and “newness” to all.

What “old” creation are we still clinging to that needs Christ’s newness to transform it? What areas of our life still need “ambassador” training, that they may fully proclaim God’s love and embody the “righteousness of God” (v. 21)?

Prayer: *You make new things out of dust, O God, you are making new things out of us. Amen.*

Wednesday, October 7

Read: Deuteronomy 6:10-25

Reflection:

God tells us to “not forget” because we often do just that. We act as if our lives are the product of our own effort and ability. That’s really only partly-true. We may have done some of the leg work, but Who gave us our bodies? Who gave us our spirits, our minds, our hearts? Who walked life’s journey with us – and provided Presence and Power, even when we did not acknowledge it?

Remembrance is discipleship because it calls us to acknowledge God’s primacy in our lives. It is a communal effort – families, parents, children, friends, neighbors – all of us must work to honor God by faithfully pointing to God’s Kingdom in all that we do. Some of us must ask “why do we do this” or “what does this mean” and others must answer.

Yet every one of us must participate in the “living memory” of discipleship. We all must recognize the symbols of God’s grace and acknowledge God’s ever-faithful presence in our stories. That recognition also extends to our history – needing to see our failures just as much as our victories. Through both, God was faithful; God is always faithful – do not forget.

Prayer: *May I not forget Your love, O LORD, keep my memory fresh daily. Amen.*

Thursday, October 8

Read: 1 Peter 5:1-5

Reflection:

Shepherding is about the sheep. Can you care for the sheep – can you get them safely from point A to B? Spiritual shepherding differs in approach only in terms of “compulsion” – “Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock” (v. 3). The only “crook” a spiritual shepherd may use is their *own* humility and reliance upon God’s Spirit.

Leading by example in this manner might mean ever-willingness to *practice* what is preached. I’m not sure real-life sheep ever followed a shepherd because he acted like a sheep better than they did. However, in the case of discipleship, we lead by living into Christ, who showed that leaders *serve* rather than be served.

To be “over” another life in the Christian faith is never about authority or power – it’s about service. Jesus leads as the True Shepherd – we shepherd others in His Name through serving and seeking to uphold his example in and through our own.

Prayer: *As I serve others, God, may I do so in humility and love for Your Kingdom, whether as shepherd or sheep. Amen.*

Friday, October 9

Read: Exodus 24:9-11

Reflection:

There are many stories like this we miss because it’s in the “Old” Testament. We leave these “jewels” buried beneath ancient narratives because their context is harsh to our supposedly “modern” senses. However, here we have a powerful image: God “feasting” with the elders of Israel – Moses and fellow leaders are invited to that “table” of God atop Mount Sinai.

Instead of asking whether this is “true” or not, dwell on this: God *communes* with us. The “brilliance” of what the elders see when they ascend the mountain defies translation – in some ways, it’s like saying, God stands “over” description. And yet this same, beauty-defying and logic-overwhelming God brings the people to *feast* in God’s presence.

Hold onto *that* image – hold onto the simple desire stretched across the page: God wants to *be* with us. The central act of “feasting” is not only a staple for existence, it is a symbol of flourishing. God calls us to “flourish” in God’s own presence – “heaven” brought to earth.

Prayer: *May we feast in Your brilliance, O LORD – may we celebrate Your presence among us, and when words fail us, may we come together around a table to share Your love with one another. Amen.*

Saturday, October 10

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, October 11 – Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-716329> or in-person, following the safety protocols. Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Almighty God, by Your Spirit You welcome us into Your life; You adopt us as Your own. Renew us in both mind and body, that we may worship You in fullness of being.

All: May we draw closer to You and to one another, ever learning how great is Your love and how wondrous Your Kingdom. Amen.

Reflection: Matthew 22:1-14; Philippians 4:4-9

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

- God invites all into God’s Kingdom, yet how we respond and follow that invitation shapes our “presence” at the “feast” (Matthew 22:1-14) – how does this relate to discipleship?
- Why is learning/education important to understanding and living in God’s world?
- By what do we know what is “true, honorable, pleasing, commendable” (Philippians 4:8)?

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.