

# COMPILATION OCTOBER 5-OCTOBER 25

## 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.**

## **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 12**

Read: Exodus 32:15-35

Reflection:

Facing our brokenness is ugly, *painful* even. This scene depicted in Scripture is violent, chaotic, and maybe, even frightful. Yet it also reveals “hope,” strange as it might seem – because brokenness does not have to be the “end” of our story.

Removing the idols in our lives “frees” us from our own destruction – again, tearing down the false gods from our lives is not painless, but it offers true redemption. When our vision is cleared, we can see what was there all along – the God who created, redeemed, and *remains* with us, even in the face of our rebellion.

What “golden calves” exist in our lives? What idols exist even within our faith? How do we cease our allegiance to them and clear the way to truly grasp God’s love and salvation for us?

Prayer: *Forgive us when we bow down to things created rather than the One who created us. Forgive us, and then lead us into a new creation by Your love. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, October 13**

Read: Philippians 3:13-4:1

Reflection:

It’s hard to move “forward” when so much of “what was” seems preferable to “what is.” Especially during a pandemic, we long for the days *without* the threat of an unknown virus and the normalcy of our routines and everyday practices. Yet here Scripture reminds us plainly that we cannot “go back.” The past is beyond us – all we have is how to “press on.”

Especially where our discipleship is concerned, all we have is what is “before us.” We give to Christ our pasts so that He may transform our present with the hope of His future. We must let go of the “former things,” and seek to embrace Christ’s *new* creation.

It’s hard to let go, particularly when we so long for the “old comforts” of the familiar past, versus the unknown discomfort of the future. Yet we cannot change “what was” – the only control we have is what to do with our present and how we will journey “forward.” All else is within the realm of God’s perfect and powerful love.

Prayer: *Jesus, I long for the golden past, but remind me that only Your love powerfully present in my life is the prize I should strive for. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, October 14**

Read: 2 Kings 17:7-20

Reflection:

The scribes that sought to record Israel’s history wrote from a theological perspective. Always they attempted to view the world and national events in light of their relationship to God. It paints a different portrait from seeing things solely through socio-political lenses. It makes one realize that nothing is truly “separate” from our relationship with God.

We no longer record history the way ancient scribes did, but what if we attempted to do so on a small scale? What if we were writing the history (or story) of FCC? Where is our relationship (or lack thereof) with God leading us? Are we honoring God’s call for us to *be* God’s people in this place – is love our expression of law?

It is humbling to take stock of our misgivings as well as our successes. There cannot be growth without loss, no victory without change. Only by embracing the full picture can we continue learning from our past so as to better live into God’s call for us in the future.

Prayer: *Your anger may burn for a moment, but Your love lasts a lifetime. Help us write our story by Your grace and Your grace alone, O LORD. Amen.*

## **Thursday, October 15**

Read: 3 John 9-12

Reflection:

The writer of this letter considers hospitality a mark of the “true” Church. Diotrephes is singled out as an individual who does not embody this practice of radical welcome. Placing others *before* self is the way of our Savior – hospitality (love of the stranger) is the *practice* of Jesus.

Welcoming others is part of our mission at FCC – we’ve written it into our very organization. Yet, like this letter reveals, it’s more than just words on a page. It is imitating (embodying) the good we have received from God – it’s bringing to life the love we profess as Christ’s.

What would someone write about *us* after an experience in our community? Would we be labeled “Diotrephes” or “Demetrius?”

Prayer: *May we imitate You, O Christ, the great Host who invites all into God’s heart and hall. Amen.*

## **Friday, October 16**

Read: Matthew 14:1-12

Reflection:

The death of John the Baptist reveals two things for me. First, that the cost of speaking truth to power is high. Proclaiming what is just and true in the face of oppressive power is offensive and often “criminalized.” John was placed in prison and then eventually executed because those with power could not stand his critique of their abuses.

Second, that those with power are enslaved to it. Herod did not wish to “kill” John because he enjoyed listening to him – much like having a strange pet on call. However, because Herod was put on the spot by Herodias, he relented. Herodias, too, danced not for herself but for the sake of her mother, who truly wanted John’s head.

The Gospel is a critique against abuse of power because Jesus too confronted those enslaved by power and offered redemption through the sacrifice of his own life. When we relinquish our power *for* others – we are then “free” from its snare and are following in the Way of our Redeemer. The “Herods” of the world may slay the prophets, but they can never conquer the Risen King.

Prayer: *Love expressed in public is justice, because it proclaims that the only true Power is You, O LORD – and in Your Kingdom, no one may be ensnared by another. Amen.*

## **Saturday, October 17**

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 18 – Worship: 10:30 a.m.**

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-218305> or in-person, following safety protocols. Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### **Call to Worship**

Leader: God of unchangeable power, when You fashioned the world the stars sang together and the host of heaven rejoiced. Open our eyes to the wonders of creation, and teach us to use all things for Your good.

**All: May we honor Your Name with the song of our lives, and bring hope to the world with our response of faith. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Psalm 96; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

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

- What reason(s) do we praise God? What is the purpose of our praise?
- Does praise take the form of music only – or does praise also flow from our discipleship?
- How might our discipleship not only serve God, but also serve our neighbor – and in such service, elicit “praise?”

### **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.**



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

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

#### **Monday, October 19**

Read: Psalm 63

Reflection:

Do our lives reflect a “thirst” for the LORD? Does God truly satisfy us or do we act as if we desire “more?” The psalmist offers a refrain of contentment in God that when we consider our own experiences may leave some room for growth. I don’t think this is a cause for alarm, but just the reality that much in our society forms us for “more.”

The psalmist changes our “more-ness” to be directed to the LORD precisely *because* God can satisfy the longing of our hearts. Through the lens of God’s Kingdom, we realize just how beautiful the world is, how important every aspect of life is and how all things have a role within God’s acts of redemption.

It’s okay to want “more” from God, so long as we realize it’s not necessarily an addition to our calendar or checking account that will provide such fulfillment, but an ever-expansive view of our relationship with the Divine.

Prayer: *Fulfill my longing, O God, through more of Your very Self. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, October 20**

Read: Revelation 18:21-24

Reflection:

The Book of Revelation, while offering a prophetic view of the present, also has a certain hope for the future. The communities of faith to which this pastoral letter were addressed faced brutal treatment from those in power, the “Babylon” of their own contexts. The writer assured them

that God's future declared those powers *defeated* – in fact, even in the present, “Babylon” was a conquered, albeit still powerful, enemy.

One day, though, just as God had signaled triumph through Jesus' Resurrection, God would finally put to rest all those powers that dehumanized and diminished God's people on earth. One day, evil would have no place in the full unveiling of the Kingdom of God.

That kind of future empowers our present. That hope emboldens us to face evil now with the presence of the Risen One, who one day will finally put all darkness and pain to rest.

Prayer: *Jesus is LORD now and forever – while we wait for the final Kingdom, may we live now under Your Kingship, and not Babylon's. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, October 21**

Read: Matthew 17:22-27

Reflection:

Jesus paid his taxes. That's not to make a statement about what kind of government Jesus envisioned or his political ideology – but rather, evidence that Jesus was under the empire's “thumb.” Taxes were one form of control Rome exacted upon its provinces – taxation was not the form of infrastructure support we know now, but financial extortion on subjugated peoples.

The taxes paid went to “Caesar” *not* Palestine – Jesus did not fight that abuse. Yet he recognized something larger than the political combat of his day – Jesus saw the reign of God *over and against* Caesar. The empire may collect taxes, but God *owned* life. Caesar may place his face upon coins, but God had placed God's “image” on human beings.

Jesus made people aware that as God's “children,” they were *free* to give of their lives for God's Kingdom. It may not have removed them from their circumstances, like taxation, but it reminded them that their value was not in their social status. Earthly kings may claim tribute, but God will always have claim on *life*.

Prayer: *Pulling a coin from a fish may not be as great a miracle as living my life under Your rule, O LORD – strengthen me for such devotion and care. Amen.*

## **Thursday, October 22**

Read: Titus 1:5-16

Reflection:

Context *matters*, otherwise the “universal truth” from this portion of text would be that people from Crete are “always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons” (v. 12). Reading Scripture at “face

value” ignores the experience of those who first wrote these words, those who first heard them, and those who cherished them enough to hold them as part of the chosen testimony of God’s people. Reading Scripture faithfully requires faithful translation – from one generation to another, from one reader to the next – this is the work of the Church.

Why read Scripture at all then? *Because* people of faith held onto *something* in these words as true of their experience and testimony of God. The “wisdom of the ages” does not become less true as time goes on, but it requires greater and greater *attention to detail* and history. In order to learn, we must read and *re-read*, taking into account our own context *and* that of the writing.

Only then will we hold up the “jewel” of God’s Word: “Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior” (v. 4).

Prayer: *Keep me reading, learning, and growing, that I hear Your Word through these words. Amen.*

## **Friday, October 23**

Read: John 5:39-47

Reflection:

Our Bibles will not save us. Our traditions will not save us. Our worship attendance nor our Christian education or service will save us. God *alone* will save us. God *has* saved us. Because of this we may live in gratitude – because of this we have been *made* disciples. God’s love enables and empowers everything else – God’s love *activates* our own.

If we do not believe God loves us (or living like we do), then trying to “prove” it through “marks of faith” won’t get us very far. Only an embrace of the God who has already embraced us will enable to us truly move forward in faith – only that kind of acceptance of the holy “unknown” will keep our feet walking after our Creator and Redeemer. Knowledge and practice are good, but until we allow ourselves to be claimed by God can we “claim” faith at all.

Don’t refuse to come to God for life – unless we *begin* with God, we have missed the true doorway and channel for everything else.

Prayer: *LORD, You give life – as I seek to live it, may I flow like a river from Your heart into the great ocean of growing and knowing that covers the world by Your power. Amen.*

## Saturday, October 24

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 25 – Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-486524> or in-person, following safety protocols. Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: God of life, we are offspring of Your will for goodness and communion between heaven and earth. Send Your Holy Spirit to direct us, to comfort us, and lead us in Your Kingdom way.

**All: Being steadfast in faith, may we increase in love and all good works, for the blessing of our neighbors and the fulfilment of Your Image. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Psalm 1; Matthew 22:34-40

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

- Notice that the context of Matthew 22:34-40 is to “test” Jesus (v. 35) – could Jesus’ response then be considered a way to disarm our ulterior motives about discipleship?
- Love of God and love of neighbor are intimately linked – can there truly be one without the other?
- Consider these words from 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: “If I...do not have love, I gain nothing” – what does it mean that perhaps all the ways of God hinge upon whether or not we can faithfully “love” our neighbors as ourselves?

### 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.**