

## **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, November 16**

Read: Psalm 83

Reflection:

Haven't you ever wanted to scream and shout at God to just do *something*? You're not alone. Many psalms and voices like this one exemplify well the human longing for God to *act*. It's noteworthy that usually the desire for that action is vindication of the speaker *over and against* their enemies. Certainly, there is room for God's intervention in our lives, on behalf of our needs and desires, and yet there's also caution against us thinking to “own” God.

The whole earth belongs to the LORD – and there are many voices that God listens to. Yet while certainly being tied down to any of them, God has committed to *all* in steadfast love. This love for us does not mean *our* every desire satisfied. Rather, it means that we will never be “outside” God's concern.

God's good *for* us, may not look like our Christmas wish list, but because it's *God's* good, we can and should trust that it will be for our flourishing in the end. So next time you want to shout out to God, go ahead – just remember, you're not the only one shouting, and your needs aren't the only ones God is holding in God's heart.

Prayer: *Your world is so much bigger than me, O LORD, and yet You do hold it all so precious and powerfully in the palm of Your hand. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, November 17**

Read: Romans 2:1-11

Reflection:

People often turn to the words of Roman 1 when passing judgment on others, but such practice ignores the warnings of Romans 2. Judgment is God's realm *alone*. We may be called to hold one another accountable to standards of discipleship (which shares a root with "discipline"), but none of us are fit to judge another.

When we judge others, whatever measure we use must be cast right back upon us – whatever standard we are holding others to can only be the same standard we hold ourselves. However we look at it, *all of us* fall short.

The Apostle Paul reminds us here that any conversation on God's judgment should include, above all, a conversation on *grace*. Instead of weighing each other's salvation, perhaps our energy is better spent receiving the sheer *enormity* of God's love? "Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you into repentance" (v. 4)? Don't get lost looking at the sins of others, and end up missing your own sin and God's overwhelming forgiveness of it all.

Prayer: *As I leave salvation to You, O LORD, may I find kindness for others and for myself, freeing me to participate in that salvation project, rather than hold it up. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, November 18**

Read: Psalm 9:1-14

Reflection:

Many of the psalms attribute images of refuge and safety within God's presence and power. Often, they utilized the language of combat and defense, because the context they wrote from was the experience of tribal warfare.

We don't need military experience to translate the assurance of God's commitment to us. No matter the "battlefield" – God offers us refuge in God's own heart. Within the realm of such assurance, is that God's power is "beyond" the rise and fall of nations. God's rule is not entrenched in the political victories of this world.

God's power comes from being the Creator and Redeemer of all. What God has brought into being, God has committed to bringing about its restoration and final redemption. Again, what greater stronghold could we ask for in such turbulent times that: "[God] judges the world with righteousness; he judges the people with equity" (v. 8).

Prayer: *Remind us that You alone are Sovereign, God, and Your redemption wins out in the end. Amen.*

## **Thursday, November 19**

Read: Genesis 48:15-22

Reflection:

Many narratives like this in Scripture subvert the “normal” trajectory of family tales. Rather than the “elder” being the primary recipient of blessing, it is the “younger” who somehow comes ahead. “The first shall be last,” Jesus would later say. Perhaps these stories are helpful reminders that our “destinies” do not follow the “normal” order of things.

God’s Kingdom is *upside-down* – it subverts the preference of strong for weak, rich for poor, elder for younger. It does not abide by an economy of greater rule, but rather, greater *serve*. Greatness, and blessing, flow not from our own inclinations, but from our capacity to follow and live as disciples.

“In giving, we receive” St. Francis of Assisi would even later say, captivated by the example of Jesus’ life and legacy. How we embody that kind of humility will only empower us for lives of discipleship and “true greatness” as defined by our Lord, and enable us to identify as the “family of God” rather than any biological labels.

Prayer: *May the God whom my ancestors in faith walked also shepherd me all the days of my life. Amen.*

## **Friday, November 20**

Read: Isaiah 40:1-11

Reflection:

This chapter marks an important shift in the Book of Isaiah. Chapters 1-39 are known as “First Isaiah” – the prophetic voice that spoke *before* Israel’s exile to Babylon. Chapter 40 begins the new period where a new voice in the “school” of Isaiah offers hope *for restoration*.

This new voice speaks from the disruption of exile and reminds Israel of God’s compassion. Whereas it seemed as if God’s judgment would be their destruction, this voice declares that God’s judgment is another faucet of God’s love – God’s response to Israel’s unfaithfulness may sting initially, but ultimately *God’s* faithfulness will soothe such wounds.

“Second” Isaiah is an important word for all Christians in that the last word of God is never one of destruction, but *restoration and rebirth*. This is a word of *resurrection* – death may claim a day, but Easter is *eternal*. God is the true Lord of history, and humanity’s hope is bound to this God who proclaims “comfort” even in the midst of despair.

Prayer: *Shepherd me from darkness into Your light, O LORD, and lead me out of my exile into Your Kingdom path. Amen.*

## Saturday, November 21

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 22 – Worship: 10:30 a.m. “Christ the King Sunday”

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-548479> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: God of power and love, You raised Jesus from death to life, the Risen King to rule over all creation. Free the world to rejoice in His peace, glory in His justice, and live in His love.

**All: Unite us in Jesus, our Savior and Lord, and send us in Your Spirit to serve our community with His benevolent reign. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Matthew 25:31-46; Ephesians 1:15-23

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

- How does the “king” in Matthew’s parable make service to the “least” the standard of service *to* the king himself?
- The Letter to the Ephesians begins with a prayer for Christ’s greatness, relating him as the “head” of the church, which is us, his “body” – what about the image makes our discipleship a continual relating to Jesus?
- How does Jesus connect love of God to love for one’s neighbor? What does that mean for our own discipleship?

### 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.**