

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 2

Read: Psalm 5

Reflection:

In times of upheaval, we should be able to take “refuge” in God who *does not delight in evil*. Chaos, terror, pain are *not* of God – they are ripples created from *our own* addiction to inequality, power, and selfishness. Yet God will not allow the world to spiral off into oblivion. God does not watch passionless as we destroy our world and one another with impunity.

God will *love* this world into wholeness. God creates *and* redeems creation – God refuses to allow *our* brokenness to reign supreme. Perhaps it’s all too easy to see the “bad” around us, but then like the psalmist, we must return to our Source and be refreshed in God’s righteousness.

Only then can we see with new sight that God is present to our pain and instead of lament, we can “ever sing for joy” (v. 11).

Prayer: *Hear our prayers, O LORD, and respond to our cries – yet as we lean into You, reveal to us Your power and ever-redeeming love. One sign of goodness at a time. Amen.*

Tuesday, November 3

Read: Acts 13:1-12

Reflection:

Though all of us share in the singular call of the Gospel, to live as disciples of Jesus – that discipleship may take *different* forms in each of us. Being “set aside” for different tasks of ministry may be quite natural for the diversity of Christ’s Body as each of us have our own different gifts, passions, and abilities.

Not all of us can teach – not all of us can preach. Not all of us can build houses or balance books. Yet no matter what ministry we are “set aside” for – it’s *pivotal* to the overall mission of Jesus. Without these various parts, the Church cannot function as an effective whole. We need to be ever willing to lay our hands on one another and “send out” our diverse agents with joy.

Unless we acknowledge the uniqueness of everyone’s “gift,” we won’t be able to harness the needed skills to engage all areas of society. From the chambers of royal power to those on the streets of daily life, the Church must use the full extent of its giftedness for the proclamation and embodiment of Good News. Otherwise, it is *we* who might as well be “groping around in the dark” (v. 11).

Prayer: *Remind Your Church, O LORD, that all are called, all are gifted, and all are needed. May we see our diverse gifts, and use them, each and every one. Amen.*

Wednesday, November 4

Read: Joshua 10:12-14

Reflection:

We can believe that miracles do happen, but we also need to recognize that context *matters*, especially in Scripture. There are many stories, particularly within the violent, warfare narratives of Israel, that were crafted within a particular worldview. In this worldview, God was often *tribal* – God was *Israel’s* “god,” and did many things for *their* success – and often, God acted according to *Israel’s* views, and less than some “universal” principle.

We don’t have to believe that the “sun” *literally* stood still (which scientifically is improbable) so that Israel could defeat their enemies. We also don’t have to believe that God fought violent battles on behalf of one tribe of people against another. Yet we can believe that God is *faithful* in bringing redemption to people wandering and lost, looking for a place to “belong” – and God is willing to take as much time as necessary to make that transformation happen.

More than Israel or any one nation, this might apply to humanity in general – that God will bring us out of our wandering and desperation to wholeness and “new creation.” Free from brokenness, and wholly complete in love eternal.

Prayer: *You will restore us, O God, and You will take as long as is necessary. Amen.*

Thursday, November 5

Read: Amos 1:1-2:5

Reflection:

The language of the prophets, like Amos, is often harsh to the eyes and ears. It would be easy to see this as the “fire and brimstone” version of religion and walk away. Yet do you wonder *why* there is such anger on the part of God – do you wonder *why* both Jewish and later Christian communities maintained this as sacred “scripture?”

God’s anger was not for the breaking of mere “rules” of spiritual disobedience. God’s people, born of God’s freedom and righteousness, had forsaken their call to discipleship and become just like “everybody else.” Greed, social injustice, religious hypocrisy, and political machination – these were the “fruits” of God’s supposed “chosen” people.

For such betrayal of God’s redemption, for such rejection of God’s creative decree, there can only *be* “anger.” Yet always behind the prophet’s indignation and outrage stands the eternal and all-encompassing word of God’s forgiveness and transformative mercy.

Prayer: *Your justice is never retributive, God, but always restorative. Make us new, even if we must feel the sting of our wrongdoing first, before the healing touch of Your forgiveness. Amen.*

Friday, November 6

Read: Amos 3:1-12

Reflection:

Again, the prophets’ anger flows from their understanding of God’s love. God had “stooped” to rescue a lowly people; the Creator of all had emptied God’s self for mortals. And for such love, God was met with *indifference*. God’s love was set upon hearts of stone.

Forgiveness is transformation because it takes us from a state of indifference or apathy into *pathos* – caring, feeling, “knowing.” When we embrace the embracing love of God, we also embrace our own faults and former injustices. We embrace the vast inequality of our relationship with God, and yet the amazing scales of grace that are always sliding in God’s direction to our benefit.

Can we allow the enormity of God’s love to change us? This is why the prophets spoke. They believed change was possible *because* God has called them to speak. Possibility was always the hope that filled the prophets’ voices, even as they declared the injustice of people’s irresponsibility and indifference.

Prayer: *May we continue to seek to know You as You have known us, O God. May we hear Your Spirit’s voice making possible change of hearts, minds, and situations. Only Your love is eternal, and thus our finitude can become a blessing. Amen.*

Saturday, November 7

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 8 – Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-818356> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: LORD God, we come to commit ourselves anew to Your Kingdom. We bring our fullness before You, offering ourselves to Your grace and love, to prepare us for true discipleship.

All: You alone are our God; You alone are our hope. As we claim You today and always, remind us that You have claimed us forever in Christ. Amen.

Reflection: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25; Matthew 25:1-13

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

- The scene from Joshua presents the “choice” of who shall the people serve. This “choice” might be one we face every day in our discipleship – by our actions, what “god” will we serve – the world, of God?
- The parable from Matthew is one that may seem unfair, but if the context is preparation, what might we consider for our own preparations in “tending” the light of God in us and in the world?
- Serving God is a continual turning away from the idols of the world – discipleship and repentance are two sides of the same coin. What idols need to be turned away from in your own life?

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.