

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 have entered the Season of Advent, or “coming,” acknowledging the gift of God “coming” into the world in Jesus. 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.

Advent

Monday, November 30

Read: Micah 4:1-5

Reflection:

Visions of prophets like Micah were originally spoken to Israel in the midst of their exile – a reminder from God’s heart that all was *not* lost. Though their circumstances were grim, and their own discipleship disrupted, God’s future for them was *restoration and not ruin*. In fact, God’s future was a whole *world* transformed, not just a single tribe.

The early Church embraced visions like this when remembering Jesus’ life and the powerful hope of his birth. Advent is a time of looking back to God entering fully the human story, but also, a looking *forward* to God’s final entrance with Jesus’ return. In Jesus’ life, we see the Kingdom of God calling us away from violent ways of earth, and true instruction enabling peace.

Advent is a time to remember that we profess to walk in this light of God revealed in Jesus. The time for honoring the old ways and the false gods is over. The time for the “raising up” of the mountain of the LORD has come. First in our present lives, and finally one day at time’s end.

Prayer: Rise above all my worldly allegiances, O LORD, and train me in Jesus’ life. May I not be wearied by the present, but allow Your future to empower our work now till Kingdom come. Amen.

Tuesday, December 1

Read: Micah 4:6-13

Reflection:

In Advent, we see the God of the universe entering the context not of privilege and power, but *weakness* and *dependence*. God chooses the “least of these” for God’s home and from the “bottom” of society’s ladder works to transform the world in an upside-down love.

Micah proclaimed against Judah that its wounded and wayward souls would *not* be abandoned, but God would reclaim them in restorative justice. God would rescue the oppressed from not only Babylon, but *all* enemies – and in that rescue, God would inspire a new witness to God’s presence and power in the world.

This world tells us to succeed and acquire all we can in order to be valued. God calls us to instead to live through *emptying* and *reliance* upon God, even in the face of oppression. Our true value is in the love of God, which can never be taken from us. No enemy can defeat God’s claim upon our lives, or the redemption God has promised for all the world.

Prayer: *May I not fear Babylon, O LORD, or whatever poverty this world thrusts upon me. Instead, may I value the riches of Your grace, and the eternal rescue of Your love. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 2

Read: Micah 5:2-5

Reflection:

When disciples read these words through the lens of Jesus, they experienced a sense of God’s provision not yet encountered. They understood Scripture’s power to speak to each new generation, but Jesus’ life seemed to bring these words to an entirely *new* context. No longer were they just about God’s provision for Israel – they were about God’s efforts in Jesus *for the whole world*. They were about God’s Messiah *in and through* Jesus.

Jesus changes everything – *especially* Scripture. By the Holy Spirit, the Church has affirmed that in Jesus, God’s Kingdom has taken on a *human* and thus *tangible* form. From “one of the little clans of Judah” (v. 2) God has brought forth redemption for *all* people. Out of a forgotten corner of the world, God has given access into the Divine life for all – Jew, Gentile, female, male, slave, free, young and old.

We can no longer read Scripture with the lens of any *one* nation or people – this is not a text about solely individual life or experience. These words speak for *all* creation – these words are about the King over *all* the earth. There is no part of existence free from Jesus’ touch.

Prayer: *Feed Your flock in the strength of the LORD, O King Jesus. May we see life through Your eyes and embrace the Kingdom You defined. Amen.*

Thursday, December 3

Read: Hosea 6:1-6

Reflection:

Part of Hosea's call as prophet was to remind the people that their grievance was *with* the LORD – for it was *God* whom they had sinned against. This was not a matter of ceremony or “religion” – this was about *relationship*. Hosea's prophetic task was to transform Israel's perspective of God to that of a *spouse*, a relationship grounded in *love* and *promise*.

Sometimes, we need to return to that perspective and remember that God is not concerned with a transactional faith, but one of *relational devotion and faithfulness*. When we fail our partners, we need to seek forgiveness – we need to mend the wrongs we've done not only by admitting our mistakes, but by living to correct and redeem them.

Advent is an opportunity to reclaim the relational discipleship God invites us to – the type of intimacy and passion exhibited by Jesus' life and ministry. It was why Jesus returned to these words when describing the Kingdom of God: “I desire mercy not sacrifice” (v. 6; Matthew 9:13).

Prayer: *Your love is greater than my sin. Help me move away from transactional faith to relational discipleship, drawing ever closer to Your heart, and being ever faithful to Your promises. Amen.*

Friday, December 4

Read: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Reflection:

God's relationship starts with us before we even are aware *of* God. God has extended a hand *to us* long before we ever consider reaching out to God. That kind of faithfulness and commitment might be overwhelming, but it's a reminder that we're never in this “alone.” We have an Eternal Advocate – a Divine spark setting our lives afire with purpose and presence.

Advent may remind us that there's no “age requirement” to embrace the gifting of Jesus. There's no boundary that God will not cross in reaching out to encounter us and “move” us to God's redemption project. The call of Jeremiah is one that lays upon all disciples – maybe not in terms of being prophetic mouthpieces *for* God, but certainly in being *vocal* about the Kingdom.

Jeremiah's sense of the Divine so enshrouded his life that it's often hard to read his words and distinguish between the *voice* of God and simply *God*. Perhaps when we return to pondering the life of Jesus, we'll see that same blending of heaven and earth, and wonder anew about the divisions in our own lives. Can we keep from speaking, and living, out God's call to us? Or will the hand of the LORD loosen our tongues and initiate uninhibited discipleship?

Prayer: *I am not my age – I am not my ability. I am Your servant, O God; speak Your word, and let my life declare it with boldness. Amen.*

Saturday, December 5

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, December 6 – 2nd Sunday of Advent – Virtual Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Join for Sunday worship, online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-139204>. Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Merciful God, You sent Your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation. Give us grace to heed their cry, then and now, and join in God’s reconciling ways.

All: Make us participants in Your new creation, and embody the hope that has taken on flesh in Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 85; Isaiah 40:1-11

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.