

## **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 9**

Read: Joshua 24:25-28

Reflection:

This is not the first time that “stones” have been witnesses against humanity’s actions, nor will it be the last. It was the ground that “cried out” to God with Abel’s blood (Genesis 4:10). Jesus claims that the “rocks” will “shout” if praise is kept from the people’s lips (Luke 19:40).

The world is watching us, *literally*. People see what we do and it reflects upon what we claim to believe. The *earth* also sees what we do, and that action, too, *testifies* to our relationship to the LORD. God has eyes everywhere, so it’s to our benefit *not* to be hypocritical with our actions and words. It’s to the benefit of our faith that we uphold what we promise with consistent deeds.

Does this mean we cannot stumble? Certainly not, but it does mean owning up to those mistakes rather than hiding away. It does mean that we need to honor the stones that watch us as much as our neighbors – we are *all* connected, and what we do to one person or in one place has consequences for everywhere else.

Prayer: *Keep me faithful to my promises, O LORD, as You are faithful in Your love, from stone to stone, person to person. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, November 10**

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Reflection:

Do we pray in such a way for God to “direct our way to you” (v. 11)? Do our actions follow such prayers that we would strive for one another’s benefit, for the flourishing of others’ *over* ourselves? This is not something originating with the apostles, but rather, what they had learned

from their Messiah Jesus. This was their understanding of the Kingdom of God revealed in Jesus, and they challenged those who shared their faith to do the same.

Can we reclaim such love of neighbor? Can we re-center Christianity on *others* versus the “self?” Instead of praying solely for what *we* need or desire, why do we not raise up the concerns of our friends, family, neighbors, and strangers? I know many of us do concern ourselves with others – but it often *follows* our own needs rather than *leads* them.

Again, this is not some “new” form of discipleship, but the model learned from Jesus. This is God’s Way *embodied* in the Christ. How might we follow Christ anew that our prayers and deeds lead *through* our neighbors instead of including them as afterthoughts?

Prayer: *Strengthen our hearts in holiness, that we may abound with love for our family of faith. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, November 11**

Read: Matthew 24:29-35

Reflection:

It’s easy to try and read Scripture as a “blueprint” for the future. The difficult part is allowing Scripture to read *us*, and transform our understandings for decisive action in the *present*. The language of “signs” in Scripture is often taken as warrant for sometimes blatantly *un-Christian* behavior, or endorsement of situations and/or contexts that are *not* Christlike, because “the world is ending.”

Yet what if instead of the “end” – Jesus is speaking of the “beginning?” What if Jesus told the disciples to “watch” and “be ready” so that they would know that Jesus’ death and resurrection created a *brand, new world*. The Kingdom of God *is* at hand, meaning it is within our grasp. God’s future is breaking into our present through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The lesson from the fig tree was that it did not bear fruit in its proper season. The “season” of the Church is now, for us to bring forth Kingdom fruit from our lives. The old world of our sin has “ended” – the “new creation” of Christ’s Body has begun.

Prayer: *I need not wait around for the End of Days. You alone, O LORD, are the End and the Beginning. May my life be found productive and alive with You always. Amen.*

## **Thursday, November 12**

Read: Judges 2:11-15

Reflection:

There's a big difference between the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges. Namely, it's a matter of perspective. Joshua maintains a largely "positive" view of Israel while Judges is, shall we say, decisively more *negative*. It all stems from "where" the people's relationship with the LORD falls in terms of their priority.

Both are narratives of violence, but perhaps a better reading than historical drama is a question of faithfulness. In Joshua, the people follow the LORD – in Judges, they follow *themselves*. They act as those "without" a true king or leader. In other words, they choose independence over discipleship – yet by raising themselves up over against God, they become "slaves" to themselves (and everyone else).

Freedom comes not by our own victory, but by realizing our dependence on God *actually brings life and liberation*. We are blessed by God's gifts, freely given and freely received. There is no "conquest" in the Christian life. Only a faithful surrender to belonging to God's grace.

Prayer: *Remind me that the life You call me to is not one of the tyranny of self, but the delightful dependence on Your grace, and following You into ever more life. Amen.*

## **Friday, November 13**

Read: Judges 2:16-23

Reflection:

The Book of Judges, while violent, offers a realistic picture of the journey of life and faith. It is more of a back-and-forth struggle to remember and reciprocate God's Image in us than it is a straightaway path to victory. God, however, does not leave us alone in such struggle. God gives us "judges" – "deliverers."

Maybe they're not the warriors or prophets of old – but the "judges" in my life were no less powerful and necessary. Sunday School teachers, ministry mentors, colleagues, volunteer coordinators, extended family members – God has used many such "deliverers" in my life to get me back "on course" to the path of God's Kingdom.

Perhaps we can be a "judge" for someone else – not in terms of dispensing a verdict, but in helping bring about a restoration to the way of God's Kingdom. Perhaps we can help "course correct" in *sharing* the struggle. That kind of shared commitment might be "violent" in terms of the risk involved to our own comfort and security. Yet it's a sign of God's devotion that we are not without resources in the quest to order our lives according to the Kingdom of God.

Prayer: *Help me see all the deliverers You send my way, O LORD, and may I greet them with open arms. Above all, may I greet Jesus, as the One Judge who truly came to save. Amen.*

## Saturday, November 14

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 15 – Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-770520> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: Giver of all gifts, we praise You for Your lavish blessing over us. May we seek to return those gifts with lives of service and love for Your creation and Your Kingdom.

**All: Keep us invested in the production of fruit by Your Spirit, discipleship that directs the world to Your glory and goodness. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Psalm 123; Matthew 25:14-30

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

- Each servant is given a different amount of talents, yet is the impetus on the advancement of those talents, not the quantity produced or their varying amounts, so long as genuine production happened?
- Are the talents ever the property of the servants, or are they “on loan” from the Master?
- Is a talent “hidden” considered “wasted” i.e. unused?

### 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.**