

## **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 Christmas, acknowledging the gift of God in Jesus. May we journey together into the new life that Christ has brought us and the Holy Spirit continually imparts to us.*

### **Christmas**

#### **Monday, December 28**

Read: Psalm 148

Reflection:

Although circumstances may not feel very praiseworthy, the truth of Christmas bids us to “Praise the LORD!” Christmas is not about what we “have” – it’s about what we’ve *already* been given. God’s gift in Jesus is the ultimate victory symbol – it is the trumpet blast that has signaled new creation, universal liberation, *salvation*.

There are “twelve days” of Christmas because we *must* sing – maybe not in a gathered sanctuary, but *every day* of our lives through service and love. We *must* rejoice because God is King, no matter the pandemic or our own problems of discomfort or disruption. God “has raised up a horn for his people” (v. 14) – God has shown all creation that God hears the groaning of this world and answers it with God’s own presence.

So, keep the “praise” coming – whether it is virtual or in-person, outdoors or behind a mask. We praise the LORD because Christmas, like Easter, is a *daily* recognition that God’s victory, and thus *our* victory, is secure. Praise the LORD!

Prayer: *Keep me singing, O God, even if it’s only with my service to others or at home behind a computer. Things may not be normal, but Your rule is unchanged, and Your glory lasts forever. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, December 29**

Read: Matthew 12:46-50

Reflection:

Christmas reminds us we are part of a “new” family. Although this time of year we usually gather with family, due to the virus, that might look different. Yet our physical family is not our

*only* family. God creates a *new* community in Jesus, one based not on blood or birth, but entirely out of the love of God.

In this family, there is *always* a place at the table. In this community, there is always room for one more. There are no hierarchies, there is no competition. There is only the shared grace of belonging to the triumphant mercy of God, and the transformation that takes place because of this value and identity.

Some families may have strife during the holidays, but the family of God should work extra hard to care for one another. The family of Jesus should strive to welcome those who have been pushed aside or left out of Christmas card lists or gift exchanges. In God's family, so long as we live in love, there will always be a home to be found in God's heart.

Prayer: *May we take comfort in belonging to You, even as we may miss or grieve our earthly families. In You, there is no shortage of sisters and brothers – there are always hands and shoulders to cry upon. Help us make this apparent especially during this season. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, December 30**

Read: 2 Peter 3:8-13

Reflection:

Advent brings to the forefront the expectation of God's "coming" – yet we are never *without* that readiness. Though the Church has been waiting thousands of years, that does not mean God is by any means "slow" to accomplish redemption in the world. What God sees and what *we* see are *not* equal, and so we pray for the sight to live *according* to God's vision.

This text speaks of the great "revealing" (apocalypse) of God's future, a revealing that has already begun in Christ. We can see God's future breaking into our present, the old order of things giving way to God's new creation. This kind of transformation doesn't follow any timeline of *our* keeping, but acts solely by the winds of the Spirit.

All the more reason for us to be alert to God's ever-transforming Spirit. We can never passively wait for God's future – Jesus has invited us to wait *actively*, joining in His ministry of reconciliation and care for all creation. In that way, we truly "wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home" (v. 13).

Prayer: *Your future is springing up all around us, O LORD; keep our eyes on Christ and help us follow in His stead, engaging new creation in our daily discipleship. Amen*

## **Thursday, December 31**

Read: John 8:12-19

Reflection:

Why is “light” so controversial? The Pharisees didn’t like being left in the “dark” – after all, *they* were the ones who were supposed to lead others to “the light.” Yet Jesus claims that he himself *is* the light – but what does light “do?”

Light reveals what was formerly hidden. Jesus uncovers the truth about ourselves: we are *broken* (even Pharisees). And we *all* need healing. Jesus reveals this truth to us, and then invites us to be transformed by its revelation, to “never walk in darkness” (v. 12).

What do you need Jesus to uncover for you? And why do we fight so hard against that revelation? Perhaps because we *can’t* live the same way once Jesus sheds light on our hidden truths. All we can do is try and live renewed in Jesus’ revelation. All we can do is be open to renewed discipleship in the “light of life” (v. 12).

Prayer: *Shine Your light upon all my falsehoods, O God, that I may live unhindered by brokenness and shame, and chase after Your grace. Amen.*

## **Friday, January 1 – “New Year’s Day”**

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Reflection:

There is a season for everything, according to the writer of Ecclesiastes. Why such a necessary reminder? Because *this too shall pass*. Pandemics are *not* eternal. Viruses are *not* everlasting. Economic fallout is *not* all-powerful. Pain, fear, anxiety, strife – these things have an *end date*.

What does *not* have an end date? God’s grace. What does not have a limitation? God’s love. What season are we *always* in? The season of *God’s control*. We belong to the One who is both *outside* time and works *within* it. Time has meaning for us, but for God, it is simply another building block in God’s great architecture.

As we begin a new calendar year, and maybe joyfully call 2020 officially “over” – we remember that no matter the date, no matter the season – God *is* God, and we are *not*. I think that perhaps there’s no better way to kick off another 365 days than that.

Prayer: *You are God, and we are not. We give thanks for Your reign over all things, including moments and minutes, months, years, and seasons. It is always Your time. For that we give thanks, and truly say, “Happy New Year!” Amen.*

## Saturday, January 2

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, January 3 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas - Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Join for Sunday worship, online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-148010> or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld God’s glory in Jesus, and for that, we desire to live lives of service and love.

**All: May our discipleship offer ‘alleluias’ of praise to the Word Made Flesh, joining in God’s Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.**

**Reflection:** Psalm 147:12-20; John 1:1-18

### 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.**