

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 Lent. Traditionally taken as a reflective walk with Jesus to the Cross, this may be better seen as an invitation to witness God in our wilderness wanderings. Life is a Lenten Season, following Jesus on the road to redemption. May we journey together into the new life that Christ has brought us and the Holy Spirit continually imparts to us.

Lent

Monday, February 22

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

Reflection:

Death to life – this is the Christian journey. It’s why Lent is such a powerful and *necessary* season. We need to walk the road to Golgotha with Jesus, not because God demands sacrifice, but because only by surrendering to the power of Resurrection can we truly be made *new*.

Without the Cross – we are *dead*. Without Jesus’ life for ours, we have no hope. But Christ *has* come – and His Spirit is *in* us. Our bodies are not just animated carbon in a vast, empty universe – we carry *life* in our bones. We carry the life and light of *God* within us.

So, we walk toward our “deaths,” not in fear – but in *trust*. That we belong to the One who conquers the grave. We belong to the One who saves us from the death of our sin and brings us into the life of the Spirit. We walk in the way of life *in the midst of death* – we walk in the Way of Jesus.

Prayer: *In Your mercy, we stand renewed and restored. May we live in joyous gratitude for such death-defying Love. Amen.*

Tuesday, February 23

Read: 1 Peter 3:8-18

Reflection:

The Way of Jesus puts *others* first – do we realize how countercultural that is? How almost, *unhuman* that way of life seems? To *not* respond with retribution or “getting even” seems not ideal for survival of the fittest – yet this is how we live into our identity as agents of “blessing.”

To bless, and *not* curse – this is Jesus’ Way. This is what God had promised to bring about through the offspring of Abraham, but it wasn’t until Jesus that we truly understand. Being human, being made in God’s Image, is about being *for others*. It is to give of “self” as God gives to this world.

There is a cost to such sacrifice – a price for selflessness. Yet, it is the *truth* of our being. It is the way of our *redemption*. “For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (v. 18).

Prayer: *Make us alive by Your Spirit, O LORD, and keep us faithful to the true Human, Jesus. Amen.*

Wednesday, February 24

Read: Psalm 77

Reflection:

Sometimes, we need to be in different seasons to hear Scripture in new ways. This psalm certainly takes on a new voice when heard from the perspective of Lent. In the midst of winter’s gloom and this longing for spring, we join with the psalmist’s cry: a mixture of praise and petition – a desire for action, and trust in God’s will.

We belong to a God who is never deaf to our cries, and yet, cry we *must* – for relationships are built on *communication*. We are those who may trust in God’s deliverance, and at the same time, call for it day after day. We can be astounded by God’s glory while also praying God will make the impossible *possible*.

Psalm 77 offers helpful language for Lent. We pray for deliverance on this road to the Cross, and yet, like Jesus, we face that great darkness believing God *will have* the last word. Hope lives *between* doubt and devotion; assurance comes *not* from sheer force of will, but the One who brings life from death.

Prayer: *You are the God who works wonders, we declare. May we live as those who trust in such deliverance, and be not afraid to call to You when we stumble. Amen.*

Thursday, February 25

Read: Genesis 15:1-6, 12-18

Reflection:

The vision to Abram is much like the promise to all God’s people: “Do you believe I can do it?” says God. “Do you believe that I am enough?”

It certainly is not an easy request on the part of the Divine – yet like Abram, we have One who upholds *both* sides of the bargain. Our God takes on both human and divine ends of the deal, and God alone assures us of its accomplishment.

To believe God is enough is no mere mental projection – it is the journey of faith that follows after the dreams of God, continuing to witness God bring those visions to *life*. This journey is not made of big leaps alone, but the small steps we take every day, trusting God to bring life where we believed none are possible.

Prayer: *LORD, there is much I do not understand or perceive how it can be made possible – but I trust in Your Word. I believe Your Voice speaks truth and love for me and the world. And I believe that is enough. Amen.*

Friday, February 26

Read: Psalm 22:23-31

Reflection:

Psalm 22 begins in lament – the very words Jesus quoted from the agony of the Cross. Yet as harsh and painful as its opening lines in, the psalm ends with *trust*. It ends with these words of belief in God’s goodness – that out of devastation, God will bring *life*. Out of darkness, God’s light *will* shine.

This is what Lent teaches us: life is difficult and full of pain, yet the final word is not death, but *life*. Despite all the chaos of living, there is *more* to the story – there is more to *God*; the challenge for us is to see through the tapestry of our lives into the great expanse of God’s love.

Did Jesus quote Psalm 22 because he only felt this prayer’s agony? Or did he quote it because despite the utter abandonment and pain, he trusted that his death would *not* be in vain. He believed in the *more-ness* of God; Jesus believed that after darkness, light *does* shine. Only by following Jesus to the Cross will we know – only by walking with Him *into* the darkest valley will we discover Resurrection.

Prayer: *For You did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; You did not hide Your face from me, but heard when I cried. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship God. For dominion belongs to the Lord, and God rules over the nations. Amen.*

Saturday, February 27

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, February 28 Worship: 10:30 a.m. – 2nd Sunday of Lent

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-638968> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: God of mercy, You are full of compassion and tenderness, slow to anger, rich in mercy, and always ready to forgive. Help us hold onto You through life’s journey.

All: May we cling to Christ, that in every way we reveal Your love in our lives, and join in being instruments of mercy to all creation. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 22:23-31; Mark 8:31-38

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

- What might it mean that Psalm 22, which Jesus quotes from upon the cross, ends in such words of assurance?
- Peter is rebuked by Jesus because he does not want Jesus’ destiny to be intertwined with suffering; how do we similarly try and direct our practice of faith away from trial?
- How might we define discipleship as “redemptive suffering” – in other words, how is Jesus’ way of sacrificial love for others a means to face life’s harsh realities without succumbing to them?

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.