

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, March 1

Read: Hebrews 1:8-12

Reflection:

This “letter” is more like recorded theology than an actual epistle to a certain community. When one reads Hebrews, they’re reading poetry and prose dedicated to the glorification of Jesus as the Messiah. In this writing we see human *meeting* the Divine – we experience the seeming impossible heights of heaven being brought *to* earth in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

This is one of the difficult parts in following Jesus. He is *more* than a good teacher and rabbi – he is *beyond* a moral exemplar. He is not only the divinely-appointed rescuer of humanity; he *is* the Divine present *in* and *through* our humanity. We not only allow Jesus to lead us – we also raise him up as *the* Image of God in our midst.

However much time passes between ourselves and Jesus’ original ministry, God’s eternal Presence *continues*. We can come again and again to Jesus’ life and find our salvation in and through it. The Spirit speaks forever from the Son who came for all of us. We can always find hope and life from what Jesus said and did. *Who* Christ is will eternally be our *redemption*.

Prayer: *Of the Son we declare boldly, Your throne is forever and ever. We joyfully approach Christ trusting in His eternal grace. Amen.*

Tuesday, March 2

Read: Genesis 22:1-19

Reflection:

The “Binding of Isaac” as this narrative is known in Judaism, is often used as a parallel for understanding Jesus’ death in Christian traditions. Yet perhaps the parallel comes *not* from seeing a “father” willing to sacrifice a “son,” but from the voice of God declaring: “Do not lay

your hand on the boy” (v. 12). The Cross is *not* God’s sacrifice of Jesus – it is God’s *end* to the ways of violence and committing *others* on the altars of the world’s sin.

Jesus is the child of Abraham who is not bound by his *father*’s ropes, but by the ropes of the world’s rulers, who cannot stand this message of *another king* and *another kingdom*. The world’s violence and sin holds Jesus to the Cross, *not* God’s demand for sacrifice. It is Jesus who sacrifices *himself* for the sake of his fellow human beings, living out an *end* to the world’s ways and the beginning of the Kingdom’s way.

Enough is enough, God says. For just as God provides a ram instead of allowing Abraham to sacrifice Isaac – God frees Jesus from death, bringing him *out* of the tomb’s darkness and *into* the world’s light. Enough is enough – let’s put down our knives for slaying others and carry our crosses into redemption.

Prayer: *On the mountain and in the valley, the LORD does provide. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 3

Read: John 12:36-43

Reflection:

What does it mean to “love human glory more than the glory that comes from God” (v. 43)? Perhaps it is to maintain the lies we speak to each other about our sense of self-worth or the supposed values of those who differ from us. Perhaps it means trusting more in the economy or politics or our own intelligence than that gentle (and sometimes not) prodding of the Spirit.

The interesting thing in this text is that despite the authorities’ fear of Jesus – there are some who still *believe*. Though they may hide it from one another, they “see” Jesus as truly *of* God. Do we follow this same practice – do our beliefs change yet we fear to share them in light of the wider majority? Do we hide our “sight” of Jesus and maintain the same old religious routine or secular attitude, fearing to speak aloud that the light of God is breaking through?

“The glory of God is humanity fully alive,” Irenaeus, an early Church writer and teacher, offered. Human glory can only be when one lives *fully for* God’s glory. Otherwise, it’s just darkness pretending that it’s light. It’s false sight pretending to see.

Prayer: *If I see You, LORD, then let me live as one who truly sees, and is not fearful to proclaim the blessed vision of Christ as King. Amen.*

Thursday, March 4

Read: Psalm 19

Reflection:

When we look up at the stars, we might feel our *own* smallness. To see the vastness of the “heavens,” we are instantly connected to the ancients who looked up at the same sky and pondered the universe and our place in it. They believed, like we may still do, that such wonders declare that God is a mighty Creator.

Yet creation not only speaks of a Creator – it tells us of redemption. The stars are a legacy of life and death – stars die and give birth to other celestial bodies: stars, moons, planets. The light we see might be from suns that burnt out millions of years ago and is only just reaching our sight. Likewise, the universe itself is a creation of life and death: immense power bursting forth to send matter hurtling across time and space forming *life*.

From the stars we might lower our eyes to *ourselves* – that the same power of creation lives within *us*. The power that made all things is the *same power* that rose Jesus from the grave, and will continue filling us with life until heaven and earth meet in God’s everlasting future. Until that day, we let the stars tell their story while we declare ours: God makes, sustains, and *loves*.

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.*

Friday, March 5

Read: Exodus 19:9-15

Reflection:

God’s entrance into the community requires *preparation*. For a holy God to come to an unholy people is quite the event – in order for the people to survive it, they need to be made “ready.” It might be easy to read this and think that God can’t enter our lives *unless* we get our affairs in order. But perhaps it’s not about us “being right” before God risks relationship with us – preparation for God’s entrance might be more about *our* ability to sustain the relationship than God abiding *our* brokenness.

If we want God to dwell with us, then shouldn’t we try and make our lives a “home” for such Presence? Through the viewpoint of ancient Israel, this looked like rituals of purity and concepts of cleanliness. Through Jesus, this might look more like practices of mercy, love, and faithfulness. Through Christ’s entrance into *our* lives, it might look more like relationship than ritual or even “purity.”

Yet the language of purity might not need to be eradicated entirely. Instead of pureness of body, maybe we still need purity of spirit – singleness of devotion to God leading us. To make ready for God’s entrance does require preparation, because none of us are ever truly ready for God to take over our lives. Yet God dwelling with us is always a partnership – a relationship. It is the Divine *embracing* human. And such holy embrace of unholy *us* certainly needs continual refinement and transformation.

Prayer: *Holy One, as You make a home in me – help me grow closer to You. Amen.*

Saturday, March 6

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, March 7 Worship: 10:30 a.m. – 3rd Sunday of Lent

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-636913> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Merciful God, in Christ You make all things new. Transform us by the riches of Your race, and in the renewal of our lives, make known Your heavenly glory.

All: By Your power made present in us, lead us to offer love and healing to one another, sharing the gift of Christ’s life with all the world. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 19; John 2:13-22

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.