

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 Holy Week. This is the pinnacle of the Church Year, following Jesus on the road to redemption and the gift of the Resurrection. May we journey together into the new life that Christ has brought us and the Holy Spirit continually imparts to us.

Holy Week

Monday, March 29

Read: John 12:1-11

Reflection:

How do we mark the sacred moments in our lives? Do we take the time to notice them, or are we annoyed when the ordinary is so scandalously (and frivolously, according to Judas) celebrated? Mary is remembered because she honors the Divine in her presence with *humble* adoration – she extravagantly loves upon the Image of Jesus in her midst.

I like that we begin this Holy Week with *this* episode (noted in all four gospels) – the anointing of Jesus. It’s a beautiful act – and done in the midst of the ordinary and on the cusp of both the unsuspecting and impending death of Christ. This act of devotion might be our invitation to take *greater* notice to the gift of life – to celebrate its fragility and finitude, while honoring the power with which God can *remake* and *restore* life.

How do we “anoint” Christ’s life in our own? How do we make known this sacred gift and find ways to make space for each in everything and everyone? Let’s attempt to slow down this week and not move too fast past the blessing Jesus has wrought for us. Let’s make our lives into an “aroma” of blessing for one another.

Prayer: *May I pause and kneel before Your gift of love, marking it with the precious oil of my life, and find ways to continue this memorial in all that I do. Amen.*

Tuesday, March 30

Read: John 12:20-36

Reflection:

Are we willing to “let go?” Are we willing to allow the “grain” of our lives to fall to the earth and “die?” This is not to say to make our lives simply a throw-away product or something that is easily dismissed or forgotten. Rather, it is the *surrender* of Jesus – it is the giving over of all that

we are *for* the Kingdom of God. Like Jesus, it is the total commitment of our being for God to make use of all we say and do for *redemption*.

This self-giving is “cross-shaped” – it is a willingness to face ridicule and death for the sake of God’s Kingdom being brought to life in us. The message of Jesus is not always welcome; compassion, mercy, forgiveness – these things might be welcome within individual hearts, but on the larger scales of the world, they just seem like mere “niceties” that pale in comparison to power, control, and security.

When we commit to Jesus, when we embrace his life, we’re *ready* to see him – truly *see Him* as the Word *Made Flesh*. We’re ready to allow Christ’s glory to shine *in* and *through* our own lives. Again, that involves a kind of “dying” to the “self” and the ways of the world, but death is *not* the end for people of Resurrection.

Prayer: *May Your Kingdom come in us and in our world, by the gift of Christ’s life for ours. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 31

Read: Isaiah 50:4-9

Reflection:

How could Jesus face his impending arrest and death? How does anyone face daunting odds stacked against them? How does one walk *willingly* into pain and suffering? Love for us, for God, for the world certainly guided Jesus’ steps, but also, I think, the resolve with which the prophet Isaiah declared: “I have set my face like flint” (v. 7).

Jesus was human, and so there were things he likely *did not* know. As much as we profess Jesus’ divinity, we also believe he was real *flesh and blood* like any of us. He was likely just as afraid as any of us would be when powers greater than ourselves conspire for our ill – when authorities lay their hands upon our very feeble lives and cast us on the precipice of death. Yet Jesus *believed* in his mission – he *believed* the Kingdom of God was worth it.

What do *we* believe? Where is our trust? What do we *love*? Only by knowing where our resolve may be found can we follow Jesus in his final days. Only by holding onto God’s promises can we set our faces like flint and steadfastly walk into the shadow of the Cross.

Prayer: *May the hope of Resurrection give me strength against death’s darkness – may Your love hold me fast to the ministry of Jesus, and follow where He has led. Amen.*

Thursday, April 1 – “Maundy Thursday”

(Service: 7 p.m. view online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/maundy-thursday-709681>)

Read: John 13:1-17, 31-35

Reflection:

Maunderly means “commandment” as in the “new commandment” (v. 34) Jesus gives his disciples during his final hours with them before his arrest. “Love” is the guiding vision for discipleship – it is the lens with which to view the Law, life, and all other pursuits we place our energy behind. There are many things Jesus could have said and done in those last moments together before chaos, but he chose to wash their feet, and break bread in *communion*.

Even those who would run when soldiers showed up, those who would lie and say they were not with him; even the one who turned him over for a handful of silver – Jesus brought all these people together and washed their feet. He shared bread and cup with them, and to them he declared: “This is my body, *for you*.”

Can we reclaim that blessed commandment? Can we set a table where *everyone* is welcome, because that is the way Jesus showed us? *No one* may be denied communion – *no one* may be exempt from this promise of love. The redemption Jesus offers covers *all* – the challenge remains: Does *our* discipleship share in such divine hospitality?

Prayer: *You dined with those who were eager to betray You; those who would not remain when the going got tough; one who would deny they had ever been Your friend. May we realize that welcome extends to the depths of our sin, that we might share the same love for others. This is the new commandment – give us the strength to honor it. Amen.*

Friday, April 2 – “Good Friday”

(Service: Noon view online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/good-friday-336440>)

Read: John 18:1-19:42

Reflection:

How can a day where someone dies be called “good?” What is “good” about death? This is the very definition of paradox – that in the utter destruction and horror of the crucifixion, the weapon of the Roman Empire against rebels and outlaws, a torture used to demoralize and crush spirits – *God was doing something more*.

As Jesus cried out from the Cross, alone and dejected, he looked out at the scores of people jeering and throwing insults. He looked through bloodied eyes at Roman soldiers, Jewish elders, women and men who had followed him but now in their fear they hid behind cloaks and buried their tears behind scarves. Between two thieves, the Son of God hung gasping for breath on a hill outside the Holy City. In all that pain and agony and doubt and heartache – Jesus sputtered: “Forgive them” (Luke 23:34).

Yet Jesus goes to his death *without* hearing God’s answer. His cries are met with *silence* – and so often that is how goes our faith journeys. Our cries are met by seeming silence. Our desire to do good for God’s world is greeted with suffering and sorrow. Yet we proclaim the Cross “good” – for we know what God does ultimately with the weapons of this world. We know that against darkness stands God’s promise of light. As painful as death is, we have to be willing to believe that God *will not remain silent*. The Kingdom of God may be cross-shaped, but it is through this sorrow that light *will* shine again.

Saturday, April 3 – “Holy Saturday”

The Church lives between Good Friday and Easter – we dwell with Christ in the dust of the earth, longing for God’s Kingdom to raise us to new life. The “silence” of this day might feel eerie, but we trust in this God of the grave. We believe that though the earth remains still, beneath the surface in the heart of all things, God is *working*. The Sabbath of this day is merely the foretaste to the eternal Sabbath coming with the Risen One.

Prayer: *Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, for You are good, and Your steadfast love endures forever. As we wait for the dawn of Your Risen One, help us to actively join in on Your work in the middle ground between Cross and Resurrection. Amen.*

Sunday, April 4 Worship: 10:30 a.m. – Easter Sunday

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-320644> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: O Christ, in Your resurrection the heavens and the earth rejoice. You have brought us from death to life and ranted us new creation.

All: Keep us in Your victory and guide us in the way of everlasting life. Give us joy in Your service and strength to live Good News. Alleluia!

Reflection: John 20:1-18; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

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.