

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 Easter. We join Jesus this gift of new life, through the hope of the Resurrection. May we journey together in this new creation that Christ has brought us by the power of Holy Spirit.

Easter

Monday, April 26

Read: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Reflection:

The transition between Saul and David is messy – and when you throw God into the mix, it becomes even more so. This is probably “politics” at its worse in Scripture. And yet, there’s also that mystery of human and Divine *partnership*. Samuel laments that Saul has essentially failed as king for Israel, but God gives the prophet a helpful nudge: “I have provided for myself a king” (v. 1).

Samuel fears the repercussions of attempting to shift the direction of Israel’s kingship, but God reminds Samuel that this is not about Israel’s kingdom, it’s about *God’s*. “The Lord looks on the heart” (v. 7), after all. God is not observing surface level differences or monitoring the socio-political landscape like some heavenly CNN – rather, God is working to bring about *shalom*, God’s peace, *through* human agency.

David turns out to be a servant “after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) – yet even *he* is capable of making mistakes. What our text invites us into is not to fear the difficulties of transitions of worldly power or the disappointment of our heroes, but to trust that God’s plan extends *beyond* what we “see.” The journey to live out God’s vision is risky, but we are “anointed” in God’s Spirit – the Spirit of the true King, Jesus, to see it through to fruition.

Prayer: *May I always be willing to measure the kingdoms of this world to Your Kingdom, O God. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 27

Read: Revelation 7:13-17

Reflection:

The vision of Revelation is a view of the *present* through the *heavenly* reality. John sees the suffering taking place around him, and from *earth’s eye*, it might appear as if all is lost. Yet

from God's point of view, *no one is lost*. The Christian communities of John's time were facing trials, and yet when John is given this look into God's realm, he sees that those who suffer are swaddled in the white cloth of *victory*.

The Lamb "at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (v. 17). This is the hope of Resurrection – this is the power of heaven *meeting* earth. God's people may taste death, but they are not held captive to its chains. The Lamb is LORD *forever*.

Perhaps we too need to look more from God's eye – perhaps we might view loss through heaven's glory, *not* earth's despair. Then we may hold onto hope, that God is *present* to our suffering and does not ignore it but plans on redeeming it – first in God's realm, and then in the *new* creation of redeemed heaven and earth.

Prayer: *God of hope, help me see through Your eyes that the toil of this world is not in vain, but we shall be robed in the victory of the Lamb. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 28

Read: Micah 7:8-20

Reflection:

The prophets welcome us to ponder the "audacity" of God's love. By reflecting on the people's brokenness and inviting humility before God's redemptive power, prophets like Micah help us explore an even grander mercy than previously imagined. It's only in light of *how far* we have strayed, do we come to realize the beauty of returning "home" to God's grace.

When we think about it, who truly is like God – taking us *as* we are and loving us *into* where we need to be? Even the best of parents, teachers, leaders – all will fall short somehow – whether through their own frustrations or ours. Yet God "does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency" (v. 18). God is defined *not* by God's anger at our sin, but by God's *loving forgiveness of it*.

Texts like these help us in living out the "good news" of Easter. We can only fully appreciate Christ's redemption when we realize it comes *after* our crucifixion of the Savior. Those nail marks are *for us* – those scars are born for *our* rebellion. Jesus does not wear these as memorials to our guilt – they are signs of the miraculous power of God's mercy.

Prayer: *How marvelous, how wonderful – is my Savior's love for me. May our response be worthy of such grace. Amen.*

Thursday, April 29

Read: Acts 8:1-8

Reflection:

The Book of Acts approaches accounts of persecution in interesting ways. They serve not as defining chapters, but *moments* where the Church faces a *choice*: To respond to hate and violence with their own anger and hurt *or* allow suffering to propel us *deeper* into God's love. The Church's pursuit of the latter option is why accounts of "miraculous" growth seem to follow in the wake of moments of heartache for the first disciples.

By following the path of God's love, Philip goes to Samaria – a region that was as dangerous for Jews as it was "unclean" for them, due to their bitter history with the Samaritans. Yet, here Philip offers the "good news" without limitation or condition and the people are *overjoyed*.

Transformation happens not because *we* have power or will to change, but because God's love *never* leaves us "be." It embraces and sets free and makes new – it faces suffering not with the weaponry of the world, but of God's Spirit. It makes enemies into friends – it makes "unclean" into *sacred*. It makes the world not a scary place but one of holy possibility and beauty.

Prayer: *Joy is part of Your life, O God, for in You we find freedom and power unlike any other. Your love changes us – help us to keep changing, even when we face difficulty; to resist responses of hate and instead continue in Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Friday, April 30

Read: Acts 8:9-25

Reflection:

There are those who when they experience the Gospel, they believe it is like any other thing in this world, and can be "bought" or "traded" or "owned." Yet Jesus' message – his life, death and resurrection – those are God's gifts of *grace*. We do not "own" the Gospel; it *owns us*. When we can surrender to its fullness, we let go of all the other falsehoods in our lives.

Simon the Magician is not a "bad man" – he's simply like the rest of us caught up in a spirituality of "things" or religious ownership. His faith is like anyone else's when it becomes purely institution or a means to an end, rather than a vehicle for encountering our own Divine Image in one another. The Spirit is an expression of God's freedom – as wild as the wind and unable to be reined in by *our* designs or desires.

Rather than treat Jesus as something we may "possess," let's rejoice in God's grace that frees us from the chains of worldly economics and value-searching. Allow God's voice to declare us our truth: *we are Beloved*. As we embrace that voice in ourselves *and* one another, we can follow the freedom of God's Spirit to proclaiming with our lives the Gospel, setting the world free from the buying and selling of its soul.

Prayer: *Holy One, may Your freedom to love and transform equip me for discipleship. Amen.*

Saturday, May 1

There are no texts for today. Rather, practice a true “Sabbath” and rest in the knowledge of God’s goodness and power to sustain all things, even when we “rest.”

Prayer: *Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, for You are good, and Your steadfast love endures forever. Amen.*

Sunday, May 2 Worship 10:30 a.m. – “Fifth Sunday of Easter”

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-466168> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Gracious God, we see Your glory in the love of Christ. May Your glory shine in our love for one another as disciples of the Risen Jesus.

All: Lead us by Your power to places unknown and people unexpected, that we might participate in Your Spirit’s embrace of the world. Amen.

Reflection: John 15:1-8; Acts 8:26-40

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.