

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

Easter

Monday, April 5

Read: Genesis 1:1-19

Reflection:

Returning to the creation story is particularly insightful after the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection, for it reminds us that God has the power to *make things new*. Genesis does not offer a “scientific” account of beginnings, but rather a poetic portrayal of the *Who*, rather than the *how*, of the universe’s origins.

Seen through the light of Easter, God is not only a masterful Creator but also a loving Redeemer. *Because* of the Resurrection, God has vindicated the announcement of God’s creation as “good.” This world *matters* to God – for Jesus did *not* return as *solely* spiritual; God’s Spirit brought *flesh and spirit back together*. The Resurrection declares to us that this world’s future is bound in *material* transformation.

So, as we dwell on the majesty of creation, we also receive the charge to care for it. God declared creation “good,” and in the Risen Christ, that goodness is *affirmed*. The Church must return to its *stewardship* of the created world – we cannot care for souls without caring for bodies, for land, for resources. This whole world is a *soul* – and the Risen Christ blesses it with his nail-pierced hands.

Prayer: *Your word of goodness stands, O God. May I embrace this declaration through Resurrection stewardship. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 6

Read: Genesis 1:20-2:4

Reflection:

Notice that living creatures are only made *after* God *makes* space for them/us. In other words, God creates space in the midst of the chaos of life *for us*. God fashions a dwelling in the wildness of the universe for life, and not only *for* life but for God to *dwell with* that life.

Only *after* that space was made with beings to dwell within did God declare that creation was “*very good*” (1:31). Perhaps our message from such Divine announcement can be to continue to be those that make “space” for one another. Perhaps in order for us to live into the “very good” of God’s creation, we need to fashion suitable habitation for God’s creatures – *all* God’s creatures – to dwell together in *communion*.

Perhaps this is what the “image” of God means – to *join* God in God’s work of “making space.” Could this be the image that Jesus returns *to us* in His Resurrection – that fully glorified, the Risen Christ occupies the space of both God and humanity and passes on that work to us to *continue* with such beloved hospitality? We may only know when *we* join Christ in the Kingdom fully come, and hear the voice of the LORD declare: “*Very good.*”

Prayer: *By making space for each other in our hearts and lives, give us strength to fashion a dwelling for Your love to be experienced by all. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 7

Read: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Reflection:

Resurrection is *victory* – the Season of Easter is all about living this gift Christ has won for us. We do not come to Easter Sunday and then just “go back to normal.” There is *no* “normal” *after* Easter – there is only the new creation of the Risen One to be embraced and declared each and every day.

How do we take Christ’s life and celebrate in the midst of ordinary life? How do we embrace difficult seasons and hard moments and say, with all honesty, “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (v. 24)? Victory does not mean that there is not still pain or trial – rather, it reminds us into *Whose* hands true power lies.

The disciples still had the Roman Empire and angry religious authorities and a whole host of other problems to face after Jesus was raised. Yet the Good News did *not* change – the power of Easter *remained* to give them strength and vision to continue the journey *in* Christ’s Name. They faced the obstacles before them as those who know that though battles must still be fought, the war had been *won* on Easter morning.

Prayer: *Your glory is no fleeting moment that disappears when challenges arise. The new creation of Christ is eternal, and we may embrace this victory anew every day, especially in the face of those moments where it seems darkest before dawn. Amen.*

Thursday, April 8

Read: Daniel 1:1-21

Reflection:

Though we may not be strangers in a strange land, Daniel's story does have parallels for Christians in the post-Easter world. We may be citizens of a certain nation with customs and culture, but where do our *priorities* lie? Who has *final* claim over our lives?

For Daniel, though he respected the Babylonian court, he could not breach his vows to the LORD. He could not forsake that which he believed to be most important to God – the care and function of his body. We may not abide by similar rules over our diets now, but our bodies *remain* temples to the LORD – our lives “house” the Spirit of the Living Christ. The Holy Spirit dwells *in* us, and we should remember when we carry out our functions *in* society.

Our true citizenship is in “heaven” – that is, the realm of God. Heaven and earth are *not* separate, but we see *through* the life of Christ that God's realm has *broken into* our own. How we model citizenship to the Kingdom of God is a true testament to where our loyalty lies. It may not call for direct opposition to our worldly citizenship, but it may ask difficult choices between the two.

Prayer: *Give us courage to live out our devotion to You, first and foremost, O God. Amen.*

Friday, April 9

Read: Daniel 2:1-23

Reflection:

It's telling that Daniel chooses to use his opportunity to impress the king of Babylon by *praising God*. For Daniel, it seems again that his priority is to the Kingdom of God rather than his own celebrity status. Humility is such an important posture because it keeps us grounded to the true Source of our being.

God gives all of us skills and passions, opportunities, and resources. *What* we use them for is a matter of discipleship. Do we turn the spotlight upon *ourselves*, or do we point *to* God, the One who gave us such prominence in the first place?

Maybe we won't have the opportunity to impress kings or rulers – maybe we can't work miracles or change the course of history. Yet we have the gift of *life* – we have voices and limbs and connections we make each and every day. What we do with that gift *matters*. It may not make the evening news, but *God* sees it. God sees it, and those who we encounter see us and know who we direct our praise towards – ourselves or *God*.

Prayer: *To you, O God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power, whatever they may be. Help me use them for the blessing of Your Name, and the benefit of Your Kingdom. Amen.*

Saturday, April 10

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, April 11 Worship 10:30 a.m. – “Second Sunday of Easter”

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-968458> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Risen Christ, breathe on us Your abundant life, that where we cannot see we may have courage to believe that we may be raised with you.

All: May we lean into the forgiveness You proclaim, and share the mercy of Your Spirit in our daily discipleship. Amen.

Reflection: John 20:19-31; 1 John 1:1-2:2

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

- What comfort is it that the first words the Risen Christ speaks to the disciples in their fear is “peace?”
- How does the church accomplish its work of proclaiming forgiveness?
- Is it fair to devalue Thomas’ actions when Jesus does not seem to chastise him as much as encourage him: “Do not doubt but believe” (Jn 20:17)? Perhaps we might see that as a challenge to “keep going *even with* doubts?”

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.