

Daily Devotional During “Social Distancing”

The following provides a daily meditation for this season of “social distancing.” We have now come to Pentecost, the Season of the Church. By the Holy Spirit’s power, we journey together in this new creation that Christ has brought us, and seek a renewed discipleship every day.

Pentecost

Monday, May 31

Read: Psalm 20

Reflection:

Where is “our pride” (v. 7) to be found – how do our beliefs show up in the midst of trial or controversy? How we react in times of stress is often a great revealer of what’s *actually* in our hearts. What we do when the “going gets tough” certainly makes plain to others the *practical* belief systems we subscribe to.

Psalms like this offer a powerful testimony that when the “day of trouble” (v. 1) set upon them, they looked for help *from* God. That does not dismiss or make light of all the practical resources God has granted us – yet at the end of the day, is what’s flowing from our lips *clearly praise for God*? Is our response to our problems a form of testimony for our faith in a redeeming God?

To trust in God’s Name is not a “blind faith,” but it certainly gives credit where credit is *due*. When we’ve used up all the resources available to us, will we take time to point to God and say, “I know that the Lord will help his anointed” (v.6). Knowledge in the biblical text is often a *tangible* and *lived* expression. To know that God will help might be to live in reasonable proclamation of that deliverance.

Prayer: *No matter the course of life, may I praise Your Name, and direct my trust to Your faithfulness, for though Your gifts are many, it is You alone that will last. Amen.*

Tuesday, June 1

Read: 1 Corinthians 2:1-10

Reflection:

I think we would benefit from *more* “talk” of the “mystery of God” (v. 1). Instead of trying to eloquently or succinctly define God down to the letter, perhaps we’d better grow in discipleship through leaning into God’s “unknowability.”

Perhaps “talk” is not the right word, either, insinuating that what’s needed is more “language” or “communication.” Yet the mystery of God is precisely not “told” through words – it’s

experienced by *action*. God's mystery is made known through love – love *for others*, love offered *from ourselves to one another*.

As we live and serve in this Pentecost season, a season of God's Spirit – let's lean into God's wisdom which *confounds* the wisdom of "the world," and shows us the "hiddenness" of God's Kingdom *in* the everyday and the surprisingly ordinary. Let's explore God's mystery by seeking to better serve each other and instead of working to "define" God, allow ourselves to *be defined* by what we know of God *in Christ*.

Prayer: *May my speech and my proclamation not be made with words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Amen.*

Wednesday, June 2

Read: Mark 4:21-25

Reflection:

Verse 25 certainly does not sound like the gratuitous love of Jesus – where's the mercy in taking from those who "have nothing?" Yet if we understand this passage in context, the larger conversation concerns *our* measures of judgment and justice. God casts *our own* lenses back upon us.

Considering *that*, if we *withhold* kindness from others – why would we not expect kindness to be withheld from us? If mercy does not flow from *our lives*, why would it flow *into* them? This "upside-down" wisdom from Jesus should startle us into the sacred *connectivity* of God's world. Why should we expect *anything* from God's creation if we totally shut ourselves off from *any* sense of *interdependence*?

The "light" of God's Spirit illuminates our shared *creature-ness* with the world. We cannot remain out of sync with what God has created nor can we live "untouched" from what God has redeemed. The power of the Risen One moves through *all of us*, and so we should do all that we can to extend that new life into everyone and everything. Imagine that *same measure* being extended right back to us, then.

Prayer: *May I use the measure of Christ, for that was the measure that was first given me – may I follow it through till life's end and new beginning. Amen.*

Thursday, June 3

Read: 1 Peter 4:7-19

Reflection:

Much of the New Testament was written from this context of “the end is near” (v. 7). Belief that Jesus’ return was *imminent* drove Christian communities to practice their beliefs in a way where they expected the full revelation of God’s Kingdom any day now. Even though it’s been two thousand years since that initial understanding, we can still share that sense of *immanence*.

Maintaining “constant love for one another” (v. 8) and acting as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (v. 10) are certainly discipleship practices that are worthwhile even now. Living as if Jesus is “near” *is* truthful, for He lives *within* each and every one of us. Though God’s final vision for redemption has not yet broken upon us, its light shines through each and every day, even if only for a moment or in the smallest acts of love.

Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God was “at hand” – that has *not* changed. Every day we’re still only one day away from eternity. Let’s live in the holy possibility of today, and love and serve one another with all that we have.

Prayer: *To You belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*

Friday, June 4

Read: 1 Samuel 5

Reflection:

This is a story that God’s Presence is possible in “unsuspecting circumstances.” Nothing would have been more foreign or opposite the God of Israel than the temple of Dagon in Ashdod. In the “heart” of the Philistine people – the ark, which was a movable throne *for* God – *topples* the idols in the “house of Dagon.”

I read this narrative as an example that even in places and customs outside our own religious experience, *God is there*. I don’t think this is a warrant for us to knock over sacred symbols of other religions. Rather, I wonder if we might appreciate in this Pentecost moment, that God’s Spirit is “uncontrollable.” The ark – a tangible symbol for God’s Presence – cannot be “possessed” by anyone. God is *free* to be *God* – anywhere, anytime.

What lessons can we learn from this story about how we treat God’s Presence in *our own* lives? Are we conscious of God in our work, our relationships, our times of enjoyment and rest? Perhaps the greatest lesson might be that *no idol* in our lives can stand higher than God – sooner or later, those things we worship will bow down to the *true* LORD. May we learn how to recognize and honor God’s Presence in every faucet of our being.

Prayer: *Make Your way in my life, O God, and may all my idols fall before Your Presence. Amen.*

Saturday, June 5

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, June 6 Worship 10:30 a.m. – “3rd Sunday of Pentecost”

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-666353> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: God of the Table, we gather today to celebrate the feast of love You provide – with thanksgiving we come to praise Your gifts of life and grace in us and in the world.

All: As You nourish us with Your Spirit, send us forth to nourish one another in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Reflection: Mark 3:20-35; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

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.