

## **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, June 14**

Read: Psalm 53

Reflection:

Is the fool the one who does not believe *in* God, or the one who acts as if there’ll be *no* reckoning for their actions? This psalm seems more concerned with the latter. It is not belief in God’s “existence” but rather that creation has *consequences* the psalmist proclaims. Israel professed a God who is *both* Creator *and* Redeemer, and it is that *redemption* that the rest of the world needs to be aware of.

Does our belief in God exclude us from consequences? Even as we hold to grace, do we therefore reject judgment? Jesus has shown us that judgment does not mean condemnation – but it might mean that refinement is “cross-shaped.” In order to truly embrace Resurrection, perhaps we need to “die” to all forms of self-centeredness and selfishness that follows what the psalmist declares as “foolish.”

Believing in grace is also believing that the God who created the world will also one day *redeem* it fully, as we have witnessed in the Resurrection. The Crucified One will come again, his nail-pierced hands outstretched in love to embrace friend and enemy both. Living in such a way where we look *forward* to that day is a lot different than living as if that day will never come.

Prayer: *When God restores the fortunes of God’s people, we shall be glad, and all the world certainly surprised at what a gracious gift this life has been. Amen.*

#### **Tuesday, June 15**

Read: Revelation 21:22-22:5

Reflection:

The visions of the Kingdom come *fully* to earth are almost too beautiful for words. These descriptions are *theological*, not meant for a blueprint of what heaven meeting earth will truly look like. In this poetry, we read of no need for temple or light, because God’s Presence will be the sanctuary we all dwell within and “see” by the illumination of God’s eternal love. We also read of the waters of the “river of the tree of life” (22:2).

That image casts my mind back to Genesis – the wedding of heaven and earth places us in the Garden once more. Humanity will walk with God, and there will be *no* shame. There will be no divisions or wounds of any kind, because “leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (22:2). This future picture is also possible *now*, in pieces perhaps, through the power of the Holy Spirit; not yet complete, but glimpses, nonetheless.

Those glimpses are seen through the love of God made visible in *our* discipleship. The Spirit of Jesus equips us to live out these visions each and every day. We participate *now* in what God will one day make full for all eternity. So, as we journey in this hope together, let the images of God’s garden of heaven and earth restore your soul.

Prayer: *May Your future shine more brightly in our present, until earth meets heaven in Your promised redemption. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, June 16**

Read: Luke 6:43-45

Reflection:

Have you ever said something and then regretted it, trying to take it back by saying, “I didn’t *really* mean that?” And yet, we *said* it. It’s a question of intent versus impact, and though we may not intend for our words to harm, they can *still* have that impact. The same is said for our actions. We all make mistakes, but to act as if our mistakes are not really *our* mistakes, is to hold to an *illusion*.

I’m not so sure we are *just* “good” or “bad” trees – I think we can produce *both* kinds of fruit. The challenge for us is to find ways of bringing that “good treasure of the heart” (v. 45) out in our daily discipleship. It’s also in acknowledging that we can just as easily produce “evil” – and when we do it, to *own* it. The Christian tradition claims this kind of honest assessment “confession.” It is not meant to waylay us with guilt, but to embrace the wrongs that we do so that Christ may clear the way in us for “good fruit” to take hold.

In this Season of Pentecost, a time of equipping by the Holy Spirit, we need to open ourselves to God’s work in us that helps prune and prim the bad fruits we can produce, so we can better bring forth fruits *of the Spirit* (Galatians 5:22-23). Such “gardening” of our hearts might require some effort, but it’s an honest refinement of the “trees” of our lives that God has planted for growth.

Prayer: *Help me, Spirit, to be aware of my shortfalls, to ask forgiveness for my failings, and to move forward in holy love, offered from the Gardener himself, for my benefit. Amen.*

## **Thursday, June 17**

Read: Acts 20:1-16

Reflection:

Verses 9-12 are perhaps one of the strangest interruptions in all of Scripture. As we follow the missionary adventure of Paul, he suddenly talks too long and someone falls over “dead” – only to be healed so that the lectures can continue...how is *this* Holy Scripture?

Is this a warrant for preachers to speak for however long they wish? Is it a quirky miracle story in a long line of wonders and conversion experiences? Perhaps it’s just a reminder that there *are* interruptions in the work of the Gospel. There are many who might “collapse” during seasons of ministry. Yet Paul reassures us: “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him” (v. 10).

Life has *many* unexpected moments. Even the unexplainable or the outrageous has a place in the Story of God. Even when we feel lost or out of our element, there are those whom God calls to remind the community: “there’s life *here*, don’t be afraid.”

Prayer: *Should I fall from the heights, place people who will pick me up again and remind me that this too is ‘gospel,’ and Your life is present. Amen.*

## **Friday, June 18**

Read: Psalm 9:9-20

Reflection:

Psalms like this one remind us that much of Scripture was written from the perspectives of the *broken* – the *downcast* – the *losers*. Those who claim a “prosperity gospel” – that God grants us and wants us to be “healthy, wealthy and wise” miss out on the testimony of people like the psalmist who declares God is a “stronghold for the oppressed” (v. 9).

It may not seem like good news to us in times of comfort, but when we face life’s uncertainty and pain, we realize just how wonderful it is to belong to the *God of losers*. We are part of the presence of the God who *abides with* the lost and heartbroken. This God is victorious, but God’s victory does not come from ignoring the world’s pain, but by walking *through it*.

Pentecost gifts us with the Spirit of the Crucified One. The Risen Jesus is victorious, but he still carries his scars of suffering. Redemption is not an erasure of pain – it is its *total vindication*. May the Spirit of the God who *does not abandon* sustain us when we face trial and hurt. May the Spirit of the God for losers give strength to all of us when we, in fact, “lose.”

Prayer: *Blessed Redeemer, thank You that Your victory is not a complete whitewashing of sorrow, but the true transformation of it through Your faithful and abiding Presence. Amen.*

## Saturday, June 19

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 20 Worship 10:30 a.m. – “5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost”

Join for Sunday worship, either online: <https://boxcast.tv/view/sunday-worship-268786> or in-person (with safety protocols). Or, use this for your own at-home worship.

### Call to Worship

Leader: O God our defender, storms may rage and cause us to fear, but You rescue us from despair and deliver us in grace.

**All: Through Christ, may we know what it is to live for You and Your world. By Your Spirit, may we share peace with all. Amen.**

### Prayer for Discovery

Leader: As we open our hearts to Your Spirit, may our lives be shaped by Your Word.

**All: Lead us in faith, so we may respond in love. Amen.**

**Reflection:** 1 Samuel 17:32-49; Mark 4:35-41; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

### 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.**