

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
THE SEASON AFTER
PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

November 20 - November 26



SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Proper 29

Fitted for God's Kingdom

We are experts at figuring out what fits. From an early age, we cultivate a sense of personal tastes and preferences. We know what flatters or feels right, and we are quick to reject anything that doesn't suit us. This week's readings, at the end of a calendar year, flip every flattering assumption by calling us to fit *ourselves* to the shape of God's everlasting and life-giving kingdom.

In the first half of the week, Jeremiah sounds the death knell on any self-serving efforts to fit God's Kingdom into a flattering form. When Jerusalem's ruler desperately wonders whether God will rescue a corrupt kingdom, the prophet conveys that God's justice will burn like consuming fire (Jer. 21:1-14). God's Kingdom is shaped by "the cause of the poor and needy" rather than self-flattering forms of "dishonest gain" (Jer. 22:1-17). If God's people fail to fit themselves to the shape of divine righteousness, God will slip them off as easily as an ill-fitting ring (vv. 18-30).

Our New Testament readings reveal the contours of life that align with our Maker and Redeemer. Those fitted for God's Kingdom will be sacrificially loving (Heb. 9:23-28), patiently faithful (1 Pet. 1:3-9), and receptive like a child (Luke 18:15-17).

On Sunday, God personally embodies the form of divine Kingship as rescuing shepherd (Jer. 23:1-6), reconciling creator (Col. 1:11-20), and forgiving Lord (Luke 23:33-43). As we approach Advent and Christmas, the Gospel suggests that we will only be ready to announce the coming Christ child as King once we have recognized His reign from the cross.

In the second half of the week, restoration and renewal rise to the surface and grip our attention. Jeremiah's condemnation and desolation are replaced by restoration and renewal. God even promises to cure the incurable wounds (Jer. 30:1-17). Fortunes will be restored, cities will be rebuilt, children will be added (vv. 18-24).

One word summarizes the hope of God's people—the word *again*. According to the prophet, God “will build you up *again*... *Again* you will take up your timbrels... *Again* you will plant vineyards” (Jer. 31:1-6). Again and again and again. Whatever devastation befalls us, God specializes in using every incident, every circumstance, and every catastrophe as another opportunity to restore our lives *again*.

Revelation propels us beyond the prospect of restoration into an apocalyptic realm of new creation. At the marriage of heaven and earth, God and the Lamb become temple and sun (Rev. 21:5-27). “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it” (Rev. 21:24). Revelation's closing promise, “Yes, I am coming soon” (Rev. 22:20) is matched by the Gospel's opening “account of the things that have [already!] been fulfilled,” (Luke 1:1-4). The stage is set, and we are ready to begin a new year under the Kingship of Christ—*again*.



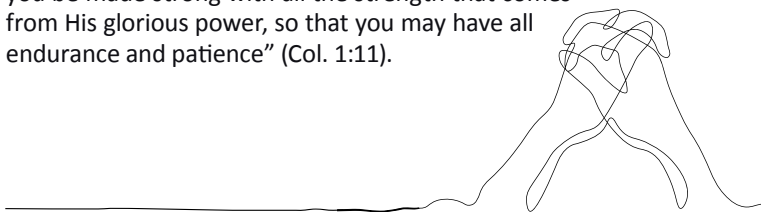
FOR PRAYER & REFLECTION

History is full of the types of leaders described in Jeremiah 23 who “destroy and scatter” rather than “rescue and gather.” *Unfortunately, you have likely suffered under the hand of someone who failed in their role* in your family, school, workplace, church, or society. *Likewise, you have failed in your own role and caused destruction and scattering.*

On Christ the King Sunday, we celebrate and contemplate Jesus as the King promised by God in Jeremiah 23, celebrated by Zechariah in Luke 1, honored by Paul in Colossians 1, and pictured by Luke in Luke 23. He is the King who reigns in righteousness, rescuing and gathering us from “the power of darkness” (Col. 1:13) and offering us “the forgiveness of sins” (v. 14). With Jesus as King we can “serve Him without fear” (Lk. 1:74) and imitate His way of leadership in our roles with others.

Do you want to shift from being one who scatters to one who gathers, from one who causes suffering to one who endures suffering in order to serve? If you do, I invite you to keep the crucifixion scene in your heart’s imagination this week. From the humiliation of the cross, Jesus reigned with humble love, revealing the heart of God and the fullest potential of humanity. In the midst of suffering, He offered forgiveness.

To help keep that scene in mind, I encourage you to *daily imagine yourself at the foot of the cross*. First, bring your wounds from others to Jesus. Pray with Him, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” Second, if there is any harm you have done to others, imagine Jesus praying that over you. As you do “may you be made strong with all the strength that comes from His glorious power, so that you may have all endurance and patience” (Col. 1:11).





SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday

Luke 1:68-79; Jeremiah 21:1-14; Hebrews 9:23-28

Friday

Luke 1:68-79; Jeremiah 22:1-17; 1 Peter 1:3-9

Saturday

Luke 1:68-79; Jeremiah 22:18-30; Luke 18:15-17

Sunday

Luke 1:68-79; Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalm 46;
Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43

Monday

Psalm 117; Jeremiah 30:1-17; Revelation 21:5-27

Tuesday

Psalm 117; Jeremiah 30:18-24; Revelation 22:8-21

Wednesday

Psalm 117; Jeremiah 31:1-6; Luke 1:1-4

Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

The Morning Liturgy

Opening Scripture

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him.

John 4:23

Opening Prayer *(based on Psalm 51)*

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim Your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of Your saving help again and sustain me with Your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

Amen.

Scripture Reading *(read Psalm and Gospel text here)*

Period of Silence

Confessing Our Faith *(Apostles' Creed)*

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect *(Proper 29)*

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in Thy well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under His most gracious rule; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

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A Midday Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of Your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit You live and reign, now and forever. *Amen.*

An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know You as You are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of Your love. *Amen.*

A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. *Amen.*

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let Your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let Your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



