

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
THE SEASON AFTER
PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

October 23 - October 29



SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Proper 25

Ways of Judgment and Blessing

This week's readings orient us to God's judgment and blessing. As we navigate a series of prophetic, pastoral, and gospel texts, we discover a God who reliably holds the wicked to account, and whose mercy far outpaces any punishment. Amid failure or sin, God always longs to preserve, bless, and restore us. Would we expect anything less from the one whose reputational shorthand was "friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34)?

The prophet Joel seesaws between judgment and blessing, straining both to explain his people's devastation and to extend a vision of future flourishing. On Thursday, chapter 1 of Joel plunges us into the desolation of an unfaithful nation defeated by hostile enemies. Their hope is shattered and their "joy is withered away" (vv. 1-12). In response, the prophet urges God's people to lament and turn to the Lord (vv. 13-20).

On Friday, chapter 2 of Joel shows them bracing themselves for the day of God's decisive intervention, known as "the day of the Lord" (v. 1). What should have been a day of rejoicing is instead a day of sorrow and gloom, as approaching armies embody God's judgment (vv. 1-11). On Saturday, God pleads for them to "Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" (v. 13). To our surprise, God is so eager to bless the wayward that He announces restoration (vv. 18-22) as soon as they gather for "sacred assembly" (v. 15).

Our New Testament readings in the first half of the week complement Joel by cautioning us against faithless folly (2 Tim. 3:1-9) and exhorting us to continue in faithful wisdom (2 Tim. 3:10-15) as we trust God's multigenerational mercy (Luke 1:46-55).

On Sunday, desolation turns to rejoicing as God showers abundance in the form of bountiful rain, bountiful harvests, and bountiful feasts (Joel 2:23-27).

Supremely, God promises to “pour out my spirit on all flesh” (Joel 2:28) as confirmation of His saving presence with His beloved children. Using a similar image, Paul tells Timothy that he is “being poured out” (2 Tim. 4:6) as an offering of sacrificial praise. In the face of persecution and possible death, Paul fears no judgment because he has kept the faith and trusts that a crown of righteousness is reserved for all who remain faithful (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

In the Gospel, Jesus reveals pride and humility as underlying sources of judgment and blessing (Luke 18:9-14). In an arresting parable, a respectable Pharisee falsely sees himself as righteous by comparing himself to other people, while a tax collector rightly recognizes his own sin by measuring himself in relation to God. The parable’s closing message mirrors our readings from Joel: God is so eager to bless the wayward that He announces restoration as soon as he cries out in humility.

In the second half of the week, the effects of pride and humility reverberate in ever-expanding circles of judgment or blessing. In Joel, hostile nations are themselves judged for violent arrogance (Joel 3:1-16), while the temple is so filled with God’s presence that it overflows with divine blessing (Joel 3:17-20). In 1 Peter, all are commanded to humble themselves “that [God] may lift you up in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6). In the end, Jesus invites us to pursue the way of righteousness by imitating anyone—however suspect or disgraced—who repents in humility and believes (Matt. 21:28-32).



FOR PRAYER & REFLECTION

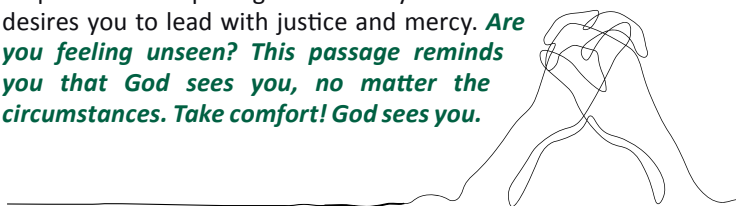
Our text this week includes Luke 1:46-55, a passage of Scripture known as *Mary's Song* or *The Magnificat*. This passage is a beautiful response of praise. Mary has just been told that she will be the mother of the Messiah, and she has gone to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is now pregnant after many years of infertility. When the women finally greet one another, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and praises God for what is happening to them both. This passage is Mary's response.

Mary is insignificant, by all accounts just a teenage girl. She is a member of an oppressed people group in an occupied land. Seemingly, there is nothing in her life that would make her stand out from others. And yet, God has seen her. *Mary's Song* reminds us that God sees people, despite their circumstances, their backgrounds, and their lack of worldly power.

We live in a world where the poor are clearly mistreated; the people in power are arrogant and uncaring. ***Mary prophesizes about a world made right, a world reordered, a reminder that God sees those in need.***

In an Advent sermon, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The song of Mary is the oldest Advent hymn. It is also the most passionate, the wildest, and one might almost say the most revolutionary Advent hymn that has ever been sung. [...] a hard, strong, relentless hymn about the toppling of the thrones and the humiliation of the lords of this world, about the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind."

Are you feeling downtrodden? This passage reminds you that God will make things right. Are you one of those in power? This passage reminds you that God desires you to lead with justice and mercy. ***Are you feeling unseen? This passage reminds you that God sees you, no matter the circumstances. Take comfort! God sees you.***





SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday	Psalm 65; Joel 1:1-20; 2 Timothy 3:1-9
Friday	Psalm 65; Joel 2:1-11; 2 Timothy 3:10-15
Saturday	Psalm 65; Joel 2:12-22; Luke 1:46-55
Sunday	Psalm 65; Joel 2:23-32; Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22; Psalm 84:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14
Monday	Psalm 87; Joel 3:1-8; 1 Peter 4:12-19
Tuesday	Psalm 87; Joel 3:9-16; 1 Peter 5:1-11
Wednesday	Psalm 87; Joel 3:17-20; Matthew 21:28-32

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

I was glad when they said unto me, "We will go into the house of the Lord."

Psalm 122:1

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 25)*

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what You promise, make us love what You command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.



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.



