THE LIVING WORD OF THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

September 18 - September 24

PENTECOST

Proper 20

The readings this week pull us into the tension of God's grief and God's glory, of human unfaithfulness and divine faithfulness.

Jeremiah cries out, "My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick" (Jer. 8:18). The psalmist laments devastation (Psalm 79:1). Amos denounces those who exploit the poor while keeping up appearances of piety (Amos 8:4–7). These are texts of anguish that refuse to look away from human violence, greed, and indifference.

But woven among them are notes of praise and hope. Psalm 113 lifts our gaze to the One "who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth" (Psalm 113:5–6). Paul urges Timothy's church to pray for everyone—kings, rulers, the whole world. Jesus tells a strange story about a dishonest manager who, in his shrewdness, finds a way to secure a future (Luke 16:1–13). Each text is pulling at us—grief and praise, lament and prayer, judgment and mercy, loss and possibility.

What do we do with all of that?

The prophet Jeremiah gives us a startling image: the heart of God broken over the pain of God's people. Psalm 79 carries this same lament. This is where discipleship begins—with honesty. Following Jesus doesn't mean pretending things are better than they are. It means being willing to share God's grief over the brokenness of the world and still daring to cry out for mercy.

And lament is not the last word. Psalm 113 interrupts with a song of praise. This is the shape of God's kingdom: lament for the broken and lifting up of the lowly. That's why Amos thunders against those who trample the needy and cheat the poor.

Paul's words to Timothy bring a surprising twist: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone" (1 Tim. 2:1). For everyone—even for rulers, for kings, for people you might not want to pray for. Why? Because God desires everyone to be saved.

In a world that divides, exploits, and tears apart, the church is called to become agents of reconciliation, not partisans of division.

And then Jesus tells the parable of the dishonest manager (Luke 16:1–13). It's a difficult story, but one key line shines through: "You cannot serve God and wealth" (v. 13). Will we use what we have—our time, our influence, our resources—to secure our own comfort, or to bless others? If there's one place we can put weight this week, it's here: Discipleship is about learning to share the heart of God.

God's heart breaks over injustice and exploitation. God's heart lifts up the poor and the needy. God's heart stretches

wide in prayer and intercession for all people. So our call is to be people whose lives echo that heart. And maybe this week, we begin by asking:

Where is God's heart breaking around me? Where is God lifting the lowly? And how can I—by prayer, by generosity, by attentiveness—join in?

FOR PRAYER & REFLECTION

Where do you turn when you are brokenhearted?

The psalms offer us a reminder that God alone is the Lord and worthy of our praise.

This week our reading includes Psalm 113, which opens with a declaration of God's worthiness and tells us that we should praise Him. This psalm takes pains to show us that God, who is Lord of all, who sits on His throne on high, is still concerned with us. It includes poetic language about God stooping down from heaven to pay attention to us here on earth.

God is concerned with us all, but He is particularly concerned with those who are oppressed, downtrodden, marginalized, and taken advantage of. Psalm 113 includes language showing that He lifts them from their lowly places and seats them with princesses and gives childless women happy homes full of children.

How can we reconcile psalms like these with our own seasons of hardship? We can be sure of being seen. We can be sure that the God of the heavens sees us, names us, and knows us. Whatever season you are walking through, you are not alone. God is not unaware of your situation. God loves you and His heart breaks for you. He has redeemed you and has a plan for your story.

This is also a good reminder to us that we need to see those around us who are experiencing oppression and hardship. How might God want us to respond? Who are the lowly in our world today and how might we be part of the Godordained work of lifting them up?

Spend a moment in quiet reflection and prayer, asking God to guide you in your actions today and joining Him in the work of bringing good news to the poor. Where can you join in social justice efforts in your community? And, if you are experiencing a season of hardship, use this psalm to guide your prayer time. Pour out your own needs

to the God who sees you.



SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday

Psalm 79:1-9; Jeremiah 12:14-13:11; Romans 3:1-8

Friday

Psalm 79:1-9; Jeremiah 8:1-13; Romans 8:31-39

Saturday

Psalm 79:1-9; Jeremiah 8:14-17; 9:2-11; Mark 12:41-44

Sunday

Psalm 79:1-9; Jeremiah 8:18-9:1; Amos 8:4-7; Psalm 113;

1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13

Monday

Psalm 106:40-48; Jeremiah 9:12-26; Acts 4:1-12

Tuesday

Psalm 106:40-48; Jeremiah 10:1-16; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Wednesday

Psalm 106:40-48; Jeremiah 10:17-25; Luke 20:45-21:4

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

O send out Your light and Your truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Your holy hill, and to Your dwelling.

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 51)

Psalm 43:3

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 20)

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

6

A Midday Prayer

Blessed Savior, at this hour You hung upon the cross, stretching out Your loving arms: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to You and be saved; for Your mercies' sake. *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

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in Your will, and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your 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.



