

MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS

1-30 April 2020



IN THIS TIME OF THE CORONA PANDEMIC



The Revised Common Lectionary

Issued by the Task Team for Congregational Witness on behalf of the Cape Regional Synod Core Ministry for Congregational Ministry and Witness Ministry.

INTRODUCTION

A state of pandemic can easily become a state of panic. This is especially true with news from different corners of the globe on how the COVID-19 pandemic is spreading; that millions of people will test positive with the coronavirus; that hospitals and clinics may not be able to treat all the people who become seriously ill with the coronavirus; and yes, that hundreds of thousands will die from COVID-19 related illnesses. The panic can make us anxious, especially when we hear within certain Christian circles that this pandemic is a “punishment from God” and the prophesied “end of time”, the end of human existence. The panic and anxiety increase even more when we hear that the COVID-19 virus is especially deadly for the vulnerable sectors of society: the elderly, those with underlying respiratory and chronic illnesses, women with small babies and people with fewer or no resources.

In times like these we all, as believers in God, need words of encouragement – words that remind us of the assurance that we belong to God and that we will get through this challenging time. We need words that remind us who we are – children of God. We are more than conquerors (Romans 8), like clay pots but with the gospel of the glory of Christ as a treasure within us (2 Corinthians 4), and people with hope (Romans 8:24). And because of this sense of belonging, of knowing who God is and therefore who we are, we can look past what the human eye can see, seeing Him who promised that He will be with us, always, till the end of age. He is with us especially during challenging times, to strengthen us, help and keep us (Isaiah 41:10).

And in times like these we must, in the midst of panic, anxiety and uncertainty, pray that the Lord will help us to see Him and to keep our eyes fixed upon Him, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12).

With these meditations we want to do just that. We want to encourage each other by inviting you to meditate on the Word of God and pray with us, as we face these challenging times together. We do it according to the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) daily readings for the month of April. My co-workers and I chose one each of the daily readings for the meditations. We share all the readings for each day and invite the whole family to read the daily readings together, reflect upon them and consider questions like: What does God call us to do in these trying times?

Thank you to my colleagues from Congregational, Witness and Supportive Ministries who worked together to make these devotionals possible. We not only share the Word through these devotionals, but also our hearts. May these words be a great blessing to you during these times of time-out, social distancing and reflection. Remember we are never alone, and He who is with us, always, is only a prayer away, because His ear is not too deaf to hear and His arm not too short to help (Isaiah 49:1).

On behalf of the Task Team for Congregational Witness and co-workers
Stephen Pedro (Rev)

DAILY READINGS FOR APRIL

Day 1-3: Rev Stephen Pedro

Wednesday, 1 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 143; Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41; Matthew 22:23-33

Focus Text: Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41

Thursday, 2 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 31:9-16; 1 Samuel 16:11-13; Philippians 1:1-11

Focus Text: Psalm 31:9-16

Friday, 3 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 31:9-16; Job 13:13-19; Philippians 1:21-30

Focus Text: Philippians 1:21-30

Day 4-6: Rev Prof Reggie Nel

Saturday, 4 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 31:9-16; Lamentations 3:55-66; Mark 10:32-34

Focus Text: Psalm 31:9-16

Sunday, 5 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21: 1-11; Isaiah 50: 4-9a, Psalm 31: 9-16; Philippians 2: 5-11; Matthew 27: 11-54.

Focus Text: Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29

Monday, 6 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Isaiah 42: 1-9; Psalm 36: 5-11; Hebrews 9: 11-15; John 12: 1-11.

Focus Text: John 12: 1-11

Day 7&8: Rev Donnie Koordom

Tuesday, 7 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Isaiah 49: 1-7; Psalm 71: 1-14; 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31; John 12: 20-36.

Focus Text: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

Wednesday, 8 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Isaiah 50: 4-9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12: 1-3; John 13: 21-32.

Focus Text: Hebrews 12: 1-3

Day 9: Rev Farren Watt

Thursday, 9 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Exodus 12: 1-4 (5-10) 11-14; Psalm 116: 1-2, 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26; John 13: 1-17, 31b-35.

Focus Text: John 13: 1-17, 31b-35

Day 10-12: Rev Dr Marlene Mahokoto

Friday, 10 April 2020:

Readings for Good Friday: Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12; Psalm 22: 1-31; Hebrews 10: 16-25; John 18: 1- 19: 42.

Focus Text: Isaiah 52: 13-53

Saturday, 11 April 2020:

Readings for Holy Saturday: Genesis 1: 1 – 2: 4a; Psalm 136: 1-9, 23-26; Matthew 28: 1-10.
Focus Text: Psalm 136: 1-9

Sunday, 12 April 2020:

Readings for Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday: Acts 10: 34-43; Jeremiah 31: 1-6; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; Luke 24: 13-49.

Focus Text: Lukas 24: 13-49

Day 13&14: Rev Xolani Mhobo

Monday, 13 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21; Colossians 3:5-11

Focus Text: Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

Tuesday, 14 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Exodus 15:1-18; Colossians 3:12-17

Focus Text: Colossians 3:12-17

Day 15: Rev Farren Watt

Wednesday, 15 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Joshua 3:1-17; Matthew 28:1-10

Focus Text: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Day 16-18: Rev Mariëte Frantz

Thursday, 16 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 2:8-15; Colossians 4:2-5

Focus Text: Colossians 4: 2-5

Friday, 17 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 5:9-6:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Focus Text: Psalm 16

Saturday, 18 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 8:6-7; John 20:11-20

Focus Text: John 20: 11-20

Day 19-21: Rev Moses Baartman

Sunday, 19 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Acts 2: 14a, 22-32; Psalm 16: 1-11; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 20: 19-31.

Focus Text: Psalm 16: 1-11

Monday, 20 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 114; Judges 6:36-40; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Focus Text: Judges 6:36-40

Tuesday, 21 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 114; Jonah 1:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:19-28

Focus Text: 1 Corinthians 15:19-28

Day 22-24: Rev Danny Bock

Wednesday, 22 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 114; Jonah 2:1-10; Matthew 12:38-42

Focus Text: Jonah 2: 1-10

Thursday, 23 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 25:1-5; 1 Peter 1:8b-12

Focus Text: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

Friday, 24 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 26:1-4; 1 Peter 1:13-16

Focus Text: Isaiah 26:1-4

Day 25-27: Rev Angelique Ghall

Saturday, 25 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 25:6-9; Luke 14:12-14

Focus Text: Luke 14: 12-14

Sunday, 26 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Acts 2: 14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1: 17-23;

Luke 24: 13-35

Focus Text: Psalm 116: 1-4

Monday, 27 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 134; Genesis 18:1-14; 1 Peter 1:23-25

Focus Text: Genesis 18: 1-14

Day 28: Rev Fred Booyesen

Tuesday, 28 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 134; Proverbs 8:32-9:6; 1 Peter 2:1-3

Focus Text: Psalm 134

Day 29&30: Rev Clive Jacobs

Wednesday, 29 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 134; Exodus 24:1-11; John 21:1-14

Focus Text: Exodus 24: 1-11

Thursday, 30 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 23; Exodus 2: 15b-25; 1 Peter 2: 9-12

Focus Text: Psalm 23

DAILY MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS

Wednesday, 1 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 143; Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41; Matthew 22:23-33

Focus Text: Jeremiah 32: 1-9, 36-41

We are isolated, not incapacitated!

By now, the words the whole world is talking about is “Corona virus” or “COVID-19”. Many parts of the world are on lock-down. Here in South-Africa we are almost a week into our lock-down period of three weeks as declared by our Government. We are already experiencing the impact of the isolation. The whole country experience what many political and church leaders like Winnie Mandela and Beyers Naudè experienced in their lifetime: ISOLATION and INCARCERATION. For them, their isolation was part of their incarceration, because they dared to speak truth to power, and for us it is to prevent a catastrophic disaster. Because the truth is, we are in this together.

The question is what do we do in this time of isolation? We can just stay inside for three weeks and hope for the best, or we can do what the prophet Jeremiah did, when he was incarcerated or isolated by King Zedekiah of Judah (Jeremiah 32: 1-3).

Jeremiah is in prison because he did what a prophet should do: he told the king what God wanted from him and what the consequences would be if he does not obey God. Whilst in isolation, something very interesting happened. God instructed Jeremiah to buy a piece of land from his cousin, Hanamel. Jeremiah carried out the instruction of God and bought the piece of land even though God told him that Judah and its king will be captured by the Babylonians (verses 3-5). Jeremiah, took God on his word, looked pass his situation of isolation, and the future capturing of the city. If the city is captured it could result in Jeremiah losing his property. The prophet acted in faith, trusting God`s hand of providence and deliverance. This is faith, trust and hope in action!

Prayer:

Father God, in these times of isolation, we pray for ears to hear Your voice amidst all the voices, eyes to see pass the crisis and hearts that will keep the faith that you will again restore us and give us back our land and Your peace. In the meanwhile, we will keep on praying, fasting, writing, texting, singing, buying, selling, working as per normal.

Amen.

Thursday, 2 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 31:9-16; 1 Samuel 16:11-13; Philippians 1:1-11

Focus Text: Psalm 31: 9-16

Even in times of Pandemic, our times are in God`s hand.

The psalmist in Psalm 31:15 declares that his times are in God`s hands. It is the words of a man who fully trusts God (verse 14). David is saying that his life is in God`s hands – his day by day circumstances and events. This is just another way of saying that he was trusting God with his life. He made this statement whilst he was in a situation where he was pursued by his enemies and he was pleading to God to rescue him with his unfailing love.

We are also in a situation where our lives are threatened. We are afraid, uncertain, and anxious, especially when we hear every day how the total, of people who tested positive with the Corona virus and dies of COVID-19 related illnesses, increases. It even contributes to our state of mind becoming depressive. But we are also certain that the God in whose hand our times is today and tomorrow, is the God that only want the best for His creation and especially for His children.

We also know that the God in whose hand our time is, is our Redeemer (v16), that He is present in our lives (v21). He listens when we call upon Him for help with our supplications (v23b). Therefore, we can, in these times of pandemic, go to Him in prayer, with boldness and assurance that He will not forsake us.

Prayer:

Lord our God, we are worried and anxious and afraid. Thank you for the assurance to know that our times is in Your loving and caring hand, especially in times of pandemic. Thank you that we know that You only want to do good to us. Come to our rescue, O God, save us with your unfailing love.

Amen.

Friday, 3 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 31:9-16; Job 13:13-19; Philippians 1:21-30

Focus Text: Philippians 1: 21-30

Let`s choose life!

In times of pandemic, especially when the death total rises, and you hear of people who are being tested positive for the COVID-19 and are dying and they are living nearby. It is natural that one will start thinking about your own life and yes about the reality of death. And if this is our state of mind, we can easily become depressed. But we have a choice: we can choose to focus on life or to focus on death.

Philippians 1: 21-30 recounts how Paul, a servant of God, also battled with this conflict of life and death within him. Here, in the prison with his name on the list of those who received the death penalty, he knows it is only a question of time before he will die at the hand of the Roman Emperor. The Apostle also struggles with this conflict within him. He knows he will be better off when he dies, because then he will be with Christ, and this is far better, he says. But he also knows that he still has a lot to do - encouraging fellow believers, proclaiming the gospel of Christ`s saving grace and to teach young believers.

Paul chooses life, a life of fruitful service.

Let us also, in our struggle with life and death during this pandemic, choose life of fruitful service. Yes, this is a time of reflection and of rest. A time to think about the preciousness of life. Let`s make the best of it. But there also are still many calls of encouragement to make, many hours of prayer to join, many texts of the good news of the gospel to spread and may times to be a friend who listens. Let`s choose life!

Prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven, we know the best place to be is with you, in life and in death. But like the Apostle Paul, and many others before and after him, we choose life today to continue with a life of fruitful labour. Thank you for this time of isolation, to reflect, to rest, to pray and fast and spend time with love ones.

Amen.

Saturday, 4 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 31:9-16; Lamentations 3:55-66; Mark 10:32-34

Focus Text: Psalm 31:9-16

Lord, in Your hands we commit our lives...

The poet, like the author of Lamentations, wrestles with attacks. As do we. It feels as if our living space is getting smaller and smaller – the oxygen is getting less and less. We are suffocating. Even Jesus, the so-called suffering servant, cries these words of Ps 31:6 on the cross: “In Your hand, I commit my spirit.” (NIV)

But these words are not his last breath. Rather these words are a confession of faith. The poet, like the one in Lamentations, confesses that we may give ourselves away – to God, because “Our times are in His hands” (v 15). He lets His face shine over us – He is the one who saves. Whether Jesus is on the way to his trial and execution in Mark 10:32 ff., whether it is nine days or 21 days into our lock-down, whether we are concerned for our very lives and future in the presence of COVID-19, we confess: Lord, in Your hands, I commit my life. My times are in your hands!

Prayer:

Lord, as we count the days, and look to Easter, we confess this morning, we give ourselves away, over to you, our times are in Your hands.

Amen.

Sunday, 5 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21:1-11; Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 27:11-54

Focus Text: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

His love endures forever

Jesus walks (rides) towards His execution. Branches of palm trees are waved and the authorities whisper slyly behind their hands. He looks these realities straight in the eye, like the poet of Psalm 118 who, in the face of “anguish” (v 5), surrounded by the nations and about to fall (v 13), can still sing with the people of the covenant: “His love endures forever.”

This makes me think of an old well-known song we used to sing: “Sing when the sun is bright, sing in the darkest night ... let us sing, sing, sing.”

There was singing when Jesus was on his way to meet his fate in Jerusalem. Today, at the beginning of the final Holy Week of Lent, let us focus our eyes on God’s enduring love and sing: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! (Ps 118:24)

Prayer:

Lord, in the face of anguish and the Holy Week of Lent, we will sing: This is Your day, the day you gave us. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Amen.

Monday, 6 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 36:5-11; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 12:1-11

Focus Text: John 12:1-11

Our God in times of vulnerability

One sometimes wonders, did Mary know what would come – the execution and ultimately the crucifixion of Jesus? Obviously, the author here is already aware of what will happen and can therefore make side-notes of Judas' question (v 4-5) and even of Jesus' answer (v 7). He writes this gospel many years after these events.

What we can see is that vulnerable people like Mary, through Jesus' life and actions, got to know Jesus as the One who draws people to him – people who often struggle, people who are burdened. They experience him as the One who will not break a "bruised reed" (Isa 42:3) or snuff out a "smouldering wick" (v 3, NIV); He is the destination of their search.

Ingrid Jonker describes this search as a wind which carries "n nag van distels" ["a night of thorns"] and "n dood sonder duisterheid" ["a death without darkness"] in her poem *Die lied van die gebreekte riete* ["The song of broken reeds"] (1959). He himself, carries this vulnerability.

Prayer:

Lord, we are also bruised reeds, who are searching for You. We come to be with you, with our tears, vulnerability, and we discover that You carry it for us.

Amen.

Tuesday, 7 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 71:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 12:20-36

Focus Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

The cross of Christ, our beacon of hope!

It is almost two weeks since South Africa went into lock-down and it was almost inevitable that by now we will start to despair due to the COVID-19 virus. The author of Psalm 71 is also in despair and he finds refuge with the Lord. In v 5 he confesses the Lord as his hope and says he has trusted the Lord since his childhood.

This Tuesday of Holy Week can be a time of hopelessness for Christians as well. Human hopelessness is an opportunity for Christians to see that the Lord is our hope.

Maybe this is the perfect time to realise that the cross of Jesus Christ is a beacon of hope. Customarily we used this time as a build-up to the celebrations of Easter with the cross as a sign of the suffering of Christ, through which we are redeemed. This year it is impossible to celebrate Easter with fellow brothers and sisters the way we used to.

Yet we are encouraged by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that the message of the cross is foolishness for the perishing, but for us who are saved, it is the power of God.

Prayer:

Oh Lord our God, our situation takes us to the brink of despair. In your Word we learn that You are our hope and that we are anchored in the crucified Christ who saves us and strengthens us. Help us to cling to that hope, but also to live in such a way that others may find hope in the hope that we find in you in this time of uncertainty. Amen.

Wednesday, 8 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32.

Focus Text: Hebrews 12: 1-3

The unknown journey: an opportunity to keep our eyes upon Jesus

Easter is the time when we focus on and commemorate the crucifixion of Christ. Hebrews 12:1-3 encourages believers to run the race of life with their eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, He who paid the highest price on the cross for us.

We are currently running a race of life on an unknown surface. It is a race we did not practise for and therefore we are not prepared for it. Part of this unknown journey is the fact that we cannot celebrate Easter the way we are used to in our tradition, and that is a huge loss for us; we find this situation unpleasant.

The good news is that this unknown journey does not nullify the cross. In fact, nothing can. Even though uncertainty and sadness are part of this journey, it is an opportunity to turn our eyes towards Jesus. It is the perfect time to gain perspective about life and faith. It is an opportunity to focus on the crucified Christ, whose death and resurrection offers us hope and redemption.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to focus on You during this extremely difficult time. Help us to see in the cross redemption, hope and healing; Your death and resurrection effected for us. Amen.

Thursday, 9 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Exodus 12: 1-4 (5-10) 11-14; Psalm 116: 1-2, 12-19; 1 Cor 11: 23-26; John 13: 1-17, 31b-35.

Focus Text: John 13: 1-17, 31b-35

Let us demonstrate the love of Jesus by washing our hands!

Today is Maundy Thursday, three days before Easter. Today we are reminded to love one another, as Jesus loved us.

Through the centuries, the church has associated the washing of feet with Jesus' command to love each other. We do not always get it right to love one another the way Jesus has loved us and still does. Feet-washing love, love that does not boast and gives security. Love that says, I am here to serve and not to be served.

And so, we are called in these times of the Corona pandemic to also love one another like Jesus did by serving others.

Acts of serving others during the lockdown and isolation, would include that we stay at home and have little to no personal contact to stop the virus from spreading. Other key acts of service would be the regular washing of our hands with soap for at least 20 seconds, to rather serve each other with an encouraging telephone call or WhatsApp message and yes, by praying for one another. All these are acts of service out of love for it will help prevent us from being infected and we will therefore not infect someone else.

Beloved let`s make it our duty because we love one another and care for each other, to stay at home as requested and find new and creative ways to serve other like Jesus. Let us take extra caution, especially those of us who have elderly or sick parents and need to go to them daily. But let`s try to minimise visits and rather stay in contact, telephonically and in prayer, even more than in the past.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for teaching us to love. In this time of minimal contact and isolation, help us to find new and creative ways to love like You, like washing our hands regularly. Help us to understand that our love and respect for one another in these times of pandemic is not to visit, have contact and rather stay at home, even though it feels unnatural.

Amen.

Friday, 10 April 2020:

Readings for Good Friday: Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12; Psalm 22: 1-31; Hebrews 10: 16-25; John 18: 1- 19: 42.

Focus Text: Isaiah 52: 13-53

Remember who you are!

It is Good Friday!! Today we are reminded of the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for us. However, even during this time of Lent, we were asked to re-dedicate and re-recommit to our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a time of withdrawal – to ponder on God’s judgement over sin but also to be amazed, once again, that Jesus died on the cross for my sins.

This year, because of COVID-19, we were indeed forced to withdraw from society. We are asked to make sacrifices for the sake of the preservation of life.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that Jesus died for our sins. And that through His wounds we have been healed. This servant of suffering, who was familiar with pain, wants to comfort us in a special way during this time of isolation. We can know for sure that God’s love for us will never cease. God’s protection will never end. Praise be to God!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the sacrifice you have made for us. You have taken all our sins upon you. Thank you for your healing power that you bless us with, even today. Dear Lord, while we struggle with the effects of COVID-19, may we experience your love and healing power in a special way. In Jesus Name we pray – Amen.

Saturday, 11 April 2020:

Readings for Holy Saturday: Gen 1: 1 – 2: 4a; Psalm 136: 1-9, 23-26; Matthew 28: 1-10.

Focus Text: Psalm 136: 1-9, 23-26

The Lord is good!

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*

Lord, we are trapped in this COVID-19 pandemic! *Do you still remember us?*

Lord the vulnerable amongst us are struggling to survive! *Do you still remember their names?*

When you read this Psalm of praise, then you instinctively want to raise your hand and ask for an opportunity to speak. The refrain “*His love endures forever*” begs the question – “Lord, what about us? What about the struggles that I must endure?”

We are children of hope. We hold on to the promises of God, despite our circumstances. Many times, we have experienced the goodness of the Lord; that God’s love endures forever. And therefore, we can sing with the psalmist – Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. *His love endures forever!*

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, that we can also sing a song of praise today. We praise you because you are good. Please forgive us when our circumstances make us doubt your goodness. Always remind us that you can blow your life-giving Spirit into any situation – even if it looks hopeless to us. Thank you, Lord, that you want to give us life in abundance. We pray this in the Name of Jesus, Amen.

Sunday, 12 April 2020:

Readings for Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday: Acts 10: 34-43; Jeremiah 31: 1-6; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; Luke 24: 13-49.

Focus Text: Lukas 24: 13-49

In our strategic retreat God journeys with us!

In life we sometimes must strategically retreat from situations. This retreat is done not because we are weak but because we understand the bigger picture. This year, the effects of COVID-19 forced us to strategically retreat, for the preservation of life.

In our scripture reading we saw that two men also retreated to the town of Emmaus. They were deeply worried about the things that has happened in the last few days in Jerusalem. And they shared all of this with Jesus. They were prevented from recognising Jesus on their journey. Only later, when Jesus broke bread and gave thanks were their eyes opened and could they recognise him.

Question: How do we retreat during this lockdown period in South Africa? Are we continuing with our lives as usual? Or are we allowing the Lord to break bread with us?

Prayer:

Dear Lord, as we strategically retreat during this difficult time in our country and the world, we ask that you journey with us. Please open our eyes so that we are not blinded to your presence; so that we are not blinded to the needs of the vulnerable in our communities. Make us willing to share and break bread with them as well.

Allow us to be a blessing to our families during this time. Teach us, through your Holy Spirit, the way in which we as a family can break bread. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

Monday, 13 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21; Col 3:5-11

Focus Text: Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

God manifests himself as Deliverer

In these two scriptures/periscopes we are reminded that we can have no part in our salvation. God is the one who saves! All that He expects from us is to not be afraid, stand firm and stay calm (14: 13).

The Israelites found themselves in a helpless and challenging situation (v10). Here, in the unknown desert, with all its dangers, they come to realize that the Pharaoh and his chariots caught up with them. They were literally trapped between the mountains and the sea. So dire was their situation that they thought they've come to the end of the road. Then they started doing what people in situations of panic and fear do, they complained, pointed fingers, and blamed. They even told Moses that they never wanted to leave Egypt and would rather be their slaves. Because in Egypt they at least had a place to be buried.

Our situation amid the COVID-19 in South Africa, like a lot of other countries all over the world, is like the Israelites here between the Pharaoh and the Red Sea. We are also facing the destructive danger of the Corona virus amid the sea of other challenges like poverty, overcrowding, lack of proper and accessible health care, etc. We can in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, like the Israelites, complain, point fingers and blame or we can follow the counsel of Moses, the servant of God: stay calm, stand firm and trust God for an outcome.

So that we, like Miriam, Aaron's sister, and all the Israelite women, will also sing, on the other side of this pandemic, a song of praise unto God for his saving act, His triumph over Corona. (Ex 15: 20-21)

Prayer:

Dear Lord, we put our trust in You, amidst this difficult and challenging time. As you've rescued the Israelites in the desert at the Red Sea, we pray that you will also deliver us from this evil virus. We know You can and will be victorious. Keep us calm, help us to stand firm, awakened and waiting on your triumphant glory.

Amen.

Tuesday, 14 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Exodus 15:1-18; Colossians 3:12-17

Focus Text: Colossians 3:12-17

Say and do everything in the Name of our Lord Jesus...

In this time of the Corona pandemic, as the virus also entered our communities and we are in lockdown and isolated into our homes, our relationship and being able to co-exist for 21 days 24/7 are also being tested. Its in times like these that we so easily can take our eyes from the enemy, the virus, and its devastating effects, and start turning on each other.

We can become irritated, finding fault, and become over-critical with each other. We can even start using words and doing things that hurt.

In this reading of today, Colossians 3: 12-17, the Apostle Paul give advice and guidance to the young community of believers in Colossae.

They are a new community with a new identity and are called upon to live in such a way that testifies to this new life in Christ. Their new way of life must be in accordance with the One who created them and brought them together. Like their Creator, they must be patient with each other, make space for each other's faults or mistakes and forgive each other (v13).

Be thankful always (v15) and rather teach and counsel with wisdom from God. In fact, the apostle pastorally counsels them, everything they say or do must be as a representative of the Lord Jesus. Meaning, must represent Christ Jesus as an offering of thanks to God.

May we also, in these difficult and stressful times, follow the apostle's counsel. Let us remember that we, as children of God, representing Christ in all we say and do to each other. Let us especially think before we speak to our loved ones with whom we are in lockdown in the same house for 21 days. Let us represent Christ in our relationships, and be careful what and how we speak, with our loved ones at home. And like the virus, let us spread this Christ-like flavour from our home to other homes and people.

Prayer:

Father God, we come to you thanking you for your loving-kindness. In these pressing and stressful times of the pandemic, we thank you for your direction in Scripture. Empower us with your Holy Spirit so that we will follow the counsel of our readings of today, and represent Jesus our Lord, starting at home with our loved ones. Help us that we will speak and act with love, patience, a forgiving spirit and thankfulness. In Jesus' mighty name we pray.

Amen

Wednesday, 15 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Joshua 3:1-17; Matthew 28:1-10

Focus Text: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

The love of the Lord endures forever!

We as South Africans are facing a time where we need to be reminded that the love of the Lord endures forever. In this pandemic that we are facing with COVID 19 - we wonder if God really does love us. So, we begin to question why these things are happening to us and what is behind them. The truth is that often we do not know why and will never know but what we can know is that these things are designed to help us become ready to live with God in eternity.

The good news is that the love of the Lord endures forever. No matter how dark things may seem, He is our light in the storm. No matter how lonely we may feel, he is our constant friend who will never leave us nor forsake us. When our load is too heavy to bear, he will carry it with us and at times for us. He is always on guard to see that we are not tempted beyond what we are able to bear but that is assuming we use His strength and allow his Spirit to empower us.

So, we can cry to the Lord in full assurance that he will hear us, and His love endures forever. There is nothing anyone can do to us that goes unnoticed by our God. It is in Jesus Christ that we are more than conquerors and will have the ultimate victory.

Prayer

O God and heavenly Father, we thank you for your enduring love. I know that I fail to live up to your glory in so many ways, but I strive to do so every day. I ask for your continued strength and wisdom to practice what I know to be right and to leave off that which I know to displease you. Help me take advantage of each opportunity to share your word, to stand for your truth and to show your love to those around me. Fill me with your Spirit so I can show your joy, your peace, and your contentment to others. I pray in the name of Jesus – Amen.

Thursday, 16 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 2:8-15; Colossians 4:2-5

Focus Text: Colossians 4: 2-5

Devote yourself in prayer

The Apostle Paul understood the power of prayer very well. Prayer was a precious part of his life and throughout his ministry he called on Christians to pray.

In Colossians 4:2 he encouraged the readers of his time: “Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and thankful heart” (vs. 1). The word ‘devote’ can also be translated, “persist in, adhere firmly or remain devoted to, which carries the idea of dedication. Persistent means not giving up, not giving in and not becoming discouraged when the situation is frightful.

Today more than ever we need to take heart to these insightful words. The pandemic casted a shadow over our lives which bring fears, anxieties, uncertainties and concerns about the future.

During this time of adversity and solitude we need to devote ourselves to God in prayer. As we pray, we sense and feel the presence of God in your midst, despite our circumstances. We reflect upon our relationship with Him and allow the fears and turmoil to melt away, because God is in control.

Prayer:

Lord of love and mercy amidst our fears and anxiety we give thanks with a grateful heart. Lord, we devote our lives to you today. Father we need your wisdom to guide us through this pandemic. We pray for healing upon the lives of those infected with the Corona virus. We also pray for the public servants (essential services), tasked to enforce adherence to the government instructions to restrict the spread of the virus. It is only through your mercy and grace that we can overcome this crisis.

Amen!

Friday, 17 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 5:9-6:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Focus Text: Psalm 16

God our refuge

The Psalmist has sought his refuge and welfare in the Almighty Lord. To take refuge in God means to trust God wholeheartedly. This prayer of David is based on the confidence of what God is to Him, a safe refuge in whom he finds shelter. When he was in trouble God protected him from his enemies. That's why he chose to give thanks to God and demonstrate his confidence in Him despite the circumstances.

Therefore, in these times of hardship and difficulty we should seek to take refuge in God in a similar way. "I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for He is right beside me" (vs. 8).

In our own strength we may not be able to overcome and endure the hard times that may lie ahead but by His power we may endure.

May the Lord sustain and shield us in times to come.

Prayer:

Lord, you alone are worthy of glory, honour, and praise. We put our trust in You and we pray that You will shield and sustain us during these difficult times. Give your leaders divine wisdom to guide us during the pandemic. We pray Lord that you will also provide in the needs of the poor, the homeless and the marginalised.

Amen!

Saturday, 18 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 8:6-7; John 20:11-20

Focus Text: John 20: 11-20

Jesus our Comforter

As the virus infect many people and claim lives, families are scared, some are bereaved and in mourning.

This recalls the picture of Mary standing outside the tomb in utter hopelessness and despair, as recorded by John. Her loving Rabboni was dead and the body gone. Suddenly, amid the calm quietness, she hears a comforting voice. It's the gentle voice of Jesus, calling her name. And with this simple act, Mary was comforted, hope and faith was restored.

Jesus has risen, He had conquered the grave and therefore He is the cornerstone of our faith. Without Jesus resurrection we have no hope beyond the grave. Hence, today amidst our fears, anxiety, and maybe sorrow, we celebrate and acknowledge this foundation of our faith. He is the risen God, our ultimate Comforter and Healer. He will never leave our side. Shalom. Peace be with you.

Prayer:

Lord our Comforter and friend you conquered the grave so that we may have eternal life. May your love and protection always surround us. Amen.

Sunday, 19 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Acts 2: 14a, 22-32; Psalm 16: 1-11; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 20: 19-31.

Focus Text: Psalm 16: 1-11

How do we find security in a time of insecurity?

It is not certain what prompted David to cry out to God for preservation (verse 1): “Keep me safe O God ...”, but the focus on the grave (verse 9-11) indicates that he might have had a close brush with death through illness or danger. The psalmist, David, begins with the prayer that he may always live in the shelter of God’s presence, for in God alone he finds happiness.

Security begins when we ask for it and seek it in God (verse 1). David focuses on three things that serves as evidence that one possesses security:

1) he delights in the Lord:

In verse 2 he stated that apart from God he has no good thing. He’s wellbeing is not beyond or outside of God. God is all the good that he needs.

2) he has delight in the Lord’s people and kingdom:

The saints (verse 3), the ones whom the Lord has set apart for Himself, they are his joy.

3) delights in the Lord’s truth:

David refuses any devotion to other gods, or what they claim to be. He delights in the Lord’s teaching (counsel) and in the light of God’s instruction he makes the Lord his constant goal in life.

David’s experience is also our experience as we can also attest to the blessedness that we have enjoyed and are still enjoying through the favour of God. Like him, at a time like these, we can also cry out to God to ask of Him to keep us safe. And like him we can have the quiet confidence in God which will settle the nerves and take away our insecurity. We might not know what future holds but we know Who holds the future in His hands!

Prayer

Lord, I just simply want to pray: “Keep me safe O God, for in You I take refuge. You are my Lord; apart from You I have no good thing. I set You before me because You are at my right hand. I will not be shaken. In this time of insecurity, You are my Security! Amen

Monday, 20 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 114; Judges 6:36-40; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Focus Text: Judges 6:36-40

Called by God in a time of Crisis

The writer of Judges (6) recorded a time when Israel was suffering at the hands of the Midianites, hiding out in the mountains-caves and forts, their fields and crops destroyed and all their livestock taken by Midian and Amalek - left with nothing for them to live on, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. The Israelites were reduced to grinding poverty by Midian and they cried out to God for help.

God decided to call Gideon to save Israel from Midian sending an angel to him.

The angel said Gideon: “God is with you, O mighty warrior!” Gideon responded by denying that God is with him and for that matter with Israel. He asked: “If God is with us, why has all this happened to us?” This is a question that many of us have asked at sometime in our lives and that many at this time of crises are asking again. God did not answer Gideon, for the Omnipresent God is with him. This is how He is known to Israel.

God commanded Gideon to go and save His people. When Gideon asked how and with what should he save Israel, the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Almighty One again said to Gideon that He will be with him and because He is with him, he will be successful in setting His people free.

This is a time when leadership is needed – in our homes, in the church, the communities, the country. If we, like Gideon, think that we are too weak, we are not capable, God is again responding today: “I will be with you, with all of you through this crisis!” I am your Guarantee!”

Prayer

Dear Lord, the crisis at hand calls for leadership in our homes, in the church, the community, South Africa and the world – leadership to guide our families, the local communities, your church, our nation and the world to respond to the corona virus doing what is needed to stop the killing of your people. We thank you so much for the calm assurance of your presence wherever we may be. We cry out to You to save us from this pandemic in Name of Jesus.

Amen

Tuesday, 21 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 114; Jonah 1:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:19-28

Focus Text: 1 Corinthians 15:19-28

We are a people of the resurrection!

During the past few months literally hundreds and thousands of people have died. And we cannot help to feel the sting of death in our own mortal, bodily existence. John Donne years ago, wrote: “...each man’s death diminishes me and therefore him for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for me.” Every time when people are laid to rest, we are reminded of our own death. It could be depressing, and it sometimes is. And death can rattle us, it can rock our faith even to the point that we are in danger to lose it!

So, how do we respond to this reality? I think we must remind ourselves of what we believe about death and life and hold on to it. We need to look at death through the lense of Easter. On good Friday they killed Jesus and laid Him to rest but coming Easter Sunday God raised Him from the dead.

Death initially came by a man, and resurrection from death came by a man. Everybody dies in Adam; but everybody, who is in Christ comes alive in Christ. Christ’s resurrection is the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep.

He has been raised up and is first in a long legacy of those who are to leave the cemeteries. But we must wait our turn: Christ is first, then those with him at his Coming, the grand consummation when, after crushing the opposition, He hands over his kingdom to God the Father.

This is our hope especially during this trying time!

Prayer

Father in heaven we mourn the death of so many who have passed on.

***We pray for their families and friends and ask that you will comfort them through the Holy spirit, that you will dry all the tears and heal for the wounds. Guide us through your Spirit to act responsibly, to care for and to protect one another. Asking it in the Name of your Son, Jesus Christ.
Amen***

Wednesday, 22 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 114; Jonah 2:1-10; Matthew 12:38-42

Focus Text: Jonah 2:1-10

Let's turn to God who can save us.

As followers of Christ, as the faith community of God, we find ourselves trapped in isolation, lockdown, and seclusion. The words on every body's lips, on social media, in news reports, and in newspaper are the words Corona virus or COVID-19.

We are faced with a worldwide crisis and we are threatened by a virus so severe that it has the potential to wipe out entire cities and countries, a virus beyond our control, a virus that takes us on a spiritual roller coaster, which leads to feelings of uncertainty, doubt, despair, and even a state of hopelessness.

Jonah also finds himself trapped, isolated, secluded and in "lockdown" in the stomach of the fish. Jonah knew that it was because of his own doing that he found himself inside the fish; he knew that it was his disobedience that led to his distress.

But even in his distress, amid feelings of guilt and anxiety Jonah teaches us something. In his anxiety, in his time of uncertainty he calls to the only Person who could save him, he turns to God – the same God from whom he ran away. In verse 7, Jonah prays: "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple."

When Jonah prayed, he prayed to Someone he knew intimately and who journeyed with him every day of his life. Even in the stomach of the fish, God was still merciful enough to bless Jonah with His compassion, protection, and care.

Beloved, let us follow Jonah's example in this time of uncertainty and anxiety, a time in which we are faced with this life-threatening virus. Let's turn to the One who could bring about change, the One who is able to deliver us from our positions of isolation, seclusion and "lockdown", the One all of us intimately know as our protector, carer and deliverer.

Prayer:

Lord, we do not know whether it is our own doing that lead to this Corona virus, a virus that threatens our very existence. What we do know, dear Lord, is that we feel trapped, isolated, and secluded and today we turn to You, our only hope. We pray that you bless us with Your merciful, loving presence and heal our families, our country, and our world. We are beggars in Your presence, o Lord, and we pray that You forgive our sins and our transgressions and lead us back to You, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

Thursday, 23 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 25:1-5; 1 Peter 1:8b-12

Focus Text: Psalm 116: 1- 4

Call upon God who listens...

As we woke up this morning, the Corona Virus is still a real threat to our families, our town, and our world. The Corona virus is still raging like a heavy storm, threatening to wipe us from the face of the earth and to strip us from our hope and joy. This raging storm, this Corona virus, may even lead to feelings of despondency, where we only focus on the now and the things we are currently experiencing.

But Psalm 116:1-4 reminds us this morning that we, as the family of believers, can look forward to a day of deliverance, a day in which God will deliver us from these times of despondency. Times described in verse 3 as days where "...the cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow."

Beloved, we should never be defined by our fear for the unknown, but we should be defined by our known God, who is able to bring about change.

Psalm 116 calls on us to focus on God, who listens to our prayers and Who can deliver us from our present situation. Call upon His name, even amid your situation, and He will come to your aid. Call upon Him, our Creator, Sustainer and Provider, and He will surely listen to our supplications.

Prayer:

Dear God and Heavenly Father, we are looking forward to Your deliverance. We are so focussed on the things happening around us, that we looked away from You, o God. You know each one of us intimately and You know our struggles and challenges. Please intervene and free us from this Corona virus. We await, dear Lord, Your mighty and timeous deliverance. Amen.

Friday, 24 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 26:1-4; 1 Peter 1:13-16

Focus Text: Isaiah 26:1-4

Put your trust in the Rock of Ages

For a very long time the world, the faith community included, chose to place their trust, their hope in the hands of mankind. In some cases this trust could even be justified, because a lot of things were achieved through mankind; like placing someone on the moon and creating aeroplanes that could travel at hundreds of kilometres per hour and at a height of several thousand kilometres.

But in the face of this latest challenge to every human being on earth, the Corona virus, it taught each one of us the valuable lesson that the knowledge and solutions of human beings are very limited. It forced us to look beyond our human existence for answers and solutions.

Isaiah 26 verse 4 invites us to put our trust in the Rock of Ages, God, who is deserving of our trust. Beloved God, our Rock, is immovable, unchanged and a solid foundation.

He remains the same yesterday, today and forever. God's love for us never changed. He loved us so much that He gave His life for us, as an atonement for our sins.

Our faith in God, our Rock, will lead us to a heavenly peace, a peace that surpasses our inability to address this challenge facing us. We will find peace in the knowledge that God is steadfast even in our uncertain times, even in times where we face death. Trust God unconditionally, now more than ever.

Prayer:

God, we confess this morning that You are the Rock of Ages, unchanged, immovable and a solid foundation. We confess that You are our certainty in times of uncertainty. We confess and acknowledge that we were blinded by the achievements of mankind – please forgive us. Help us to turn to You, our solid Rock, whom we can fully trust and on Who we can built our faith with confidence. Bless our families, our country and our world with Your steadfast presence. Amen.

Saturday, 25 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 25:6-9; Luke 14:12-14

Focus Text: Luke 14: 12-14

Practice what you preach.

We are equal... is probably a concept more talked about than practiced. We know we should treat everyone equally, but do we really do it?

The sad reality is that we live in a world where we are classified by our ethnicity, culture, race and even our social standing.

We have grown so accustomed to it that we are, at times, blinded by it.

Through these few verses in Luke 14:12-14, we are called to open our eyes to the truth and to start practicing what we preach.

In a time, such as this we are called, maybe not physically, to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind to our kitchen or dining room tables. To create a round table so that there are no sides or preferred seating positions.

Because in the eyes of God, we are all equal.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, forgive us that we do not always treat our brothers and sisters equally. Forgive us that we have come to just accept the inequalities we see happening around us. Thank you that in Your eyes we are equal. Thank you that You do not class us but that You love us all. Help u to be more like you.

Amen.

Sunday, 26 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Acts 2: 14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1: 17-23; Luke 24: 13-35

Focus Text: Psalm 116: 1-4

Please and thank you

As children we are taught two very important (yet basic) phrases: *please* and *thank you*. When using it we often do not realize the magnitude of how the two should go together.

The Psalmist demonstrates this in Ps 116. In the beginning of the chapter he asks God to help him. He does not explain his situation in detail, yet he expresses his need for God. At the end of the chapter he thanks God for what He has done because we cannot ask please without saying thank you. The Psalmist teaches us that being thankful is more than just expressing it in words but by also expressing it in actions.

We may have a lot to ask God (*please*) but we should always make time to say *thank you* and express it through our actions.

So, what do you want to thank God for today?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I am so quick to ask you for anything and slow to express my thankfulness. So today I want to say thank you for all that you have done for me and my family. Thank you that I am Your child. Thank you for forgiving my sins. Thank you that you love me. Thank you, Lord.

Amen.

Monday, 27 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 134; Genesis 18:1-14; 1 Peter 1:23-25

Focus Text: Genesis 18: 1-14

All things are possible

The first few verses of chapter 18 teach or remind us to be hospitable to whoever crosses our paths. That we are expected to be kind and loving towards one another. Yet the narrative changes when Sarah comes on the scene.

She overhears a conversation which prophesied that within a year she will have a child. Keeping in mind that she and Abraham were not that young anymore. So, her automatic response was to laugh (within) because how can it be. Sarah at this point probably gave up on having a child of her own. It is here where the narrative changes.

We are taught, in this passage, that whatever may seem impossible to humans is possible with God. Yet we should remember that things will not happen at our given time, it is always on God's time. God determines the when, where and how. All we must remember is that all things are possible with God.

Prayer:

Lord, forgive me for not always being patient. Forgive me for doubting in Your plan for my life. Lord, there is so much in the world I do not understand, always, but I trust you because all things are possible with you. Amen.

Tuesday, 28 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 134; Proverbs 8:32-9:6; 1 Peter 2:1-3

Focus Text: Psalm 134

We are blessed, not cursed, so that we can be a blessing to others.

21 days of lock down is officially over, however, uncertainty is persisting. Yesterday's freedom day celebrations has come to an end. Joy amid uncertainty?

Psalm 134 plays out against the background (backdrop) of probably the Feast of the Tabernacles where the main emphasis gratefully fell on the liberation from Egypt and the journey through the desert.

At the end of the feast the temple goers must go home.

With what are they going from the temple into the future after they have experienced such Spirit filled moments with family, friends, and others of the faith? What can they take home with them? Just a blessing? Just that? Do I hear people ask: "Is this enough? Is there not something more tangible?"

What was the content of the song? At the beginning (verse 1-2) there is encouragement from those in the temple for the priests who served in the temple. They are asked to continue with their work, intercession and hymns of praise: this is what they were called to and to which they committed themselves. "Continue with it," the people asked. Do not stop doing it. Ministers (preachers) of the Word, every believer, the people expect it from us. No, the Lord, who called us, expects from us to continue.

The priests answered this request authoritatively with a greeting of blessing for the uncertain times that lies ahead. Normally the blessing could be pleaded for protection and for security of life, etc. As a guarantee for the blessing the people are reminded that He lives in Zion and that He is the Creator God. The blessing that is bestowed on the departing congregation asks that God will kneel with His people, that He will ascend on them, that He will come down and will stay in a relationship with them. So, if something goes wrong in their personal lives, in the lives of the people, that He will watch over them from that relationship.

Why? Because He is JAHWE, the I-AM-WHAT-I AM. So, we are called to continuously bless so that others can be blessed, because God has blessed us!

Let me conclude this devotion by one of Eugene H Peterson's quotes: "God comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us."

Prayer:

"May now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in these difficult times. Amen."

Wednesday, 29 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 134; Exodus 24:1-11; John 21:1-14

Focus Text: Exodus 24: 1-11

He is our God; we belong to Him.

Biblically speaking the word Covenant in the Old Testament refers to the agreement between God and the Israelites, in which God promised to protect them if they kept His Law and were faithful to him. Here in Exodus 24:1-11, Moses took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the Israelites. On hearing the actual terms of agreement which God made with them, the people agreed to it by saying that they will obey.

Moses then took half of the blood of the offerings and sprinkled it on the people and said: “This is the blood of the Covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”(v 8)

The meeting at Mount Sinai confirms this Covenant between God and his children. There He reveals his will unto them – He reveals himself to them again as the One who loves and protects them.

We too are a Covenant people through our baptism and through the blood of Jesus. Peter, the apostle, starts his first letter with these words: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. (1 Peter 1:1–2 ESV)

In these uncertain times we should remind ourselves of our baptism and that we are part of the elect “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.” We need to reconfirm that we are children of the Covenant, reconfirm our faith in the Lord, living in obedience to Him, knowing that He will not leave us nor forsake us! And as part of our obedience to Him we will look after one another and do nothing that will endanger the life of our neighbours.

May we, who are bound together by the blood of Jesus, experience the presence of the Triune God amid this pandemic.

Prayer

Lord, our God, amid the difficult circumstances that we found ourselves, we want to gather as families around your holy throne and become aware of your Covenant promises. You are our God - we are your people - we belong to You and You belong to us – and we belong to one another. Amen

Thursday, 30 April 2020:

Readings for the day: Psalm 23; Exodus 2: 15b-25; 1 Peter 2: 9-12

Focus Text: Psalm 23

Our greatest Comfort

The psalmist uses the metaphor of the shepherd to describe God’s care for him. Just as a shepherd cares for and protects his sheep so the Lord also cares for and protects us. The sheep is the object of the shepherd’s protecting care even if they find themselves in the darkest of places. In the same way the Lord protect the psalmist and us when we find ourselves, figuratively speaking, in darkness.

Psalm 23 – this is a song that we grew up with – the comforting prayer in times of need and misery – the anchor of faith in times of uncertainty and fear. And when we hear the psalm, then the promises from this shepherd song lift us above our difficult circumstances. It is as if the pastures are greener, as if the waters bring a deeper peace, as if the power that becomes available to us inspire us to attempt the almost impossible.

Since the outbreak of this destructive pandemic we are facing this terrifying illness, but through it all we are being reminded of God’s loving and caring presence.

We just know: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil” for You are here, you were always here – You will always be here. This is how David prayed and this is how we should also pray.

And yes, in the face of this fearsome enemy we can take our place at your table. Despite misery, pain, and sorrow we know that we will still enjoy your protection, hospitality, goodness and favour – not only now, but forever!

Prayer:

Thank you, heavenly Father, that You are our greatest comfort. Thank you for being our greatest comfort. Thank you that, in our deepest need, we can depend on You. We honour you for your grace.

Amen.