

**Devotions – December 12-18, 2021**

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**Sunday, December 12, 2021**

Text: Genesis 32:27-30

**27**So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." **28**Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." **29**Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. **30**So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

It seems so often we wrestle in our faith life. Yet such an experience is nothing new. As we hear in this story Jacob is wrestling in his faith. I mean he is actually physically wrestling with God; how much more of a wrestling match with faith is that? Yet such a match ends in a blessing and a name change to reflect Jacob's ability to wrestle with both God and humans and prevailing. To this extent I feel we too should be wrestling with our faith. For such a wrestling match can lead to a better and more deeper understanding of our faith and our relationship with God. For truly as we wrestle in our relationships with God, we gain a better understanding of said relationships. Which actually, as with Jacob could provide more of a blessing that what we might not have seen before.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, be patient with us as we wrestle and deepen our sense of relationship with you. For we, too, like Jacob strive to see you face to face and be blessed to prevail in our lives. Amen.*



**Monday, December 13, 2021**

Text: Exodus 3:3-6

**3**Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." **4**When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." **5**Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." **6**He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

So often I would imagine we envision some type of grand supernatural experiences when it comes to encountering God. To this extent I wonder if encountering God is something we truly want to do. For such encounters may strike more fear in us than appreciation. Moses, as we hear in this story, has quite a first impression when it comes to meeting God. Such an encounter, as with most of us I would imagine, strikes fear. However, as the story moves on from this passage Moses does not run away. Moses actually continues in the relationship with God and what develops is a powerful story about God, Moses, and the people of Israel. Even though our imagery of encountering God may be a fearful one, the reality is our relationship with God is anything but fearful. For being in a relationship with God is full of love and enrichment for not just our lives but for others as well. So instead of being afraid of God let us embrace the loving relationship with God for all our lives.

Let us pray: *Oh God, though you may sound intimidating and fearful we pray that you accompany and enrich us in our lives. May we to be like Moses and come to experiences your greatness. Amen.*



**Tuesday, December 14, 2021**

Text: 1Samuel 3:10-11

**10Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." 11Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.**

I am not sure if making peoples tingle from what they hear would be a good thing. In fact, the rest of the dialog between Samuel and God reveals the not so nice actions God is going to do for Samuel's mentor Eli. Yet despite such an action comes the lifting up of Samuel as the new prophetic voice in Israel. A voice that ultimately brings about both blessings and challenges to the community. So, for God to act in a way that not only brings punishment to some but a new helpful voice for the community can be full of mixed emotions. Which when it comes to mixed emotions, they do often result in having such tingling feelings.

Let us pray: *Oh God, we know your actions may bring mixed emotions that can cause us to have tingle feelings. However, reassure us that such actions are ones that ultimately bring about your care and love for all the world. Amen.*



**Wednesday, December 15, 2021**

Text: 1King 19:12-15

**12**and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. **13**When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" **14**He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." **15**Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram.

Sometimes despite all the chaos that goes on in our world we tend to meet God in the silence. This seemed to be the case for Elijah. Though the verses before this passage talk about a lot of more earthly chaos Elijah witnessed before encountering God, the prophetic life of Elijah also seemed to be full of a lot of chaos in general. Which probably has Elijah to the point of an exhausted speech in response to God's inquiry. God then recognizes Elijah's exhaustion and points him in a direction that begins a new transition for the prophetic world. Just like for Elijah, God can be just as active for us in our chaotic world. For God does encounter us where we are and can guide us in the transitions that bring better things to come. Which just like for Elijah can probably bring great relief to know about God's help and care in our chaotic lives.

Let us pray: *Oh God as you engage us in the midst of our chaotic world, we appreciate your presence. We ask that like with Elijah, you help and guide us through the transitions we have in our lives. Amen.*



**Thursday, December 16, 2021**

Text: Mathew 1:21-23

**21She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."**

As we come to the New Testament, we identify God coming to engage us through Christ. Christ who is Emmanuel as this passage points to at the beginning of Matthew's gospel. This engagement is not done on a major level but in a very simple small way. Yet what becomes of such an engagement is far more significant than any of us can imagine. Not only does Christ save us from our sins but Christ inspires this expansive relationship with God for the world. From this engagement in Christ, we are able to experience a whole new relationship with God who has been with the world since the beginning. So despite such average beginnings comes the greatest new thing the world has ever known.

Let us pray: *Oh God, we give you thanks for engaging with us through Christ who not only saves us from our self but inspires us in our everyday life. Amen.*



**Friday, December 17, 2021**

Text: Acts 2:1-4

**1When the day of Pentecost had come; they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.**

I must admit violent winds do make me nervous. Though most often my experiences with violent winds have been with tornados or winds that come off of Lake Superior. Both types of violent winds can be very destructive. However, the violent wind that comes to the disciples in this passage is God's Spirit. A Spirit that is to help and encourage the disciples to go forth into the world. A world that has multiple languages but still needs to hear about God's good news found in Christ. By receiving such a gift from the Spirit, the disciples can go forth to speak to

the whole world of the good news of Christ. Which unlike other violent winds makes the violent wind in this story a good one.

Let us pray: *Oh God, we thank you for the violent wind of your Spirit. May your Spirit always bring forth your goodness to all people in the world. Amen.*



**Saturday, December 18, 2021**

Text: Revelation 21:3-6

**3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." 5And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also, he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.**

Revelation can have some strange imagery within its context but can also reveal a powerful message regarding God's engagement with humanity. In this passage we hear of not only the promise of God dwelling but also alleviating our pain, sorrow, and death. God who is all encompassing and powerful yet desires and promises to care for us. Such a message tells us of the hope and joy that ultimately comes within the connection in which we have with God. Which is why it is truly wonderful to have such an amazing engaging God.

Let us pray: *Oh God, through your promises we gain a glimpse of your greatness and the care which you have for us. May you never stop engaging with us in our lives for it is truly a benefit for us all. Amen.*

