

# Daily Devotions

September 18-24, 2022

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## Answering God's Call in Uncertain Times

**Sunday, September 18, 2022**

Text: Exodus 3:12-15

**And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be a sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM' has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, 'The God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.”**

In this passage, Moses has also received a call from God to rescue the Israelites from their slavery and the reassurance of a sign of God's faithfulness - “when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this (very same) mountain.” But Moses, although willing to say, “the God of your fathers...” somehow seeks a more specific “name” for God. And God's response is one of the most powerful and definitive in scripture, “I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites, 'I AM' has sent me to you.” And God further emphasizes, “This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.” Hence, the one true God has emphatically claimed his name by his very existence, I AM who I AM – and nothing else is needed.

**We Pray:** *Living God, who is now and ever shall be named I AM, receive our thanks and praise for all the works of your hand and your steadfast love that is never ending.*

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**Monday, September 19, 2022**

Text: Psalm 27:1-6

**The Lord is my light and salvation – whom shall I fear. The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?**

**When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.**

**When an army besiege me, my heart will not fear. Though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.**

**One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and seek him in his temple.**

**For in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe in his dwelling: he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.**

**Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surrounded me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord.**

In this text, the Psalmist evokes very specific images of war and conflict, experiencing an attack and the very real threat and fear of bodily harm. And yet, “The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” If we truly trust in God's protection, then this is not foolish confidence but our abiding faith in God's love and promise.

**We pray:** *As we continue to witness the very real impact of war and invasion which the people of Ukraine have endured for six months, may we continue to work tirelessly to provide assistance – wherever we can and in all the ways we can. And may we all rest in the assurance that you are always present.*

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**Tuesday, September 20, 2022**

Text: Isaiah 10:1-4

**Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain.**

This passage from Isaiah speaks to an age-old and yet contemporary issue of discrimination and oppression of those who are vulnerable – specifically widows and orphans – but in today's world, so many more. As I travel through western Canada and Alaska these weeks, I am again reminded of the many ways in which First Nation peoples were treated as “less than human” by each group of explorers, settlers, and missionaries. The Residential Schools and removal of children from their parents are unfortunately the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century examples of this passage.

**We Pray:** *How to begin again, Lord? We witness the First Nation groups that have sought ways to heal and restore their language and culture. How must we? Through God's Grace: may we speak Truth; Acknowledge our part; and seek Reconciliation; that we may restore Trust.*

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**Wednesday, September 21, 2022**

Text: Jeremiah 9:23-24

**This is what the Lord says, “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man of his strength, or the rich man of his riches, but let him who boasts, boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.**

In this passage from Jeremiah, we are reminded about what is truly important – neither wisdom, strength, nor wealth – but understanding of God's intentions for his people. What does God ask of us? To do unto all others as he has shown us – with kindness, compassion, justice, and love for all. Do we actually boast of these attributes or our relationship with God? Probably not. What we can do is humbly seek to be in community with others, to seek to understand God's Word, and to care for all in need with love and compassion.

**We Pray:** *O God, overflowing with mercy and compassion, you lead back to yourself all those who go astray. Preserve your people in your loving care, that we may reject whatever is contrary to you and follow all things that sustain our life in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.*

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**Thursday, September 22, 2022**

Text: Psalm 137:1-5

**By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept, when we remembered Zion.**

**There by the poplars, we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; They said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”**

**How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?**

**If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget it's skill.**

**May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.**

How can we truly understand what it means to be an exile? The siege of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. ended with the destruction of the city, its walls, and Solomon's temple. Many of the population of Jerusalem were removed to exile in Babylon, where they lived for three generations. How could they not question their identity and God's faithfulness? Although choosing and trusting *their* way rather than God's had led to their predicament, they were reminded by the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, that their exile was a demonstration of God's unwavering faithfulness, compassion and love. Hence, they remembered Zion and wept for their loss, their exile, and the overwhelming tasks ahead of them.

We have witnessed the exile of over 12 million people from Ukraine since Russia's invasion – 5 million to neighboring countries and 7 million displaced inside Ukraine itself. In real time, we have seen their suffering, courage, and resilience – in an exile that continues.

**We Pray:** *Lord of life, be with all your people in exile and enable us to rebuild lives, dedicated to showing love and compassion for all and to celebrate diversity and justice in our world.*

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**Friday, September 23, 2022**

Text: John 15, 9-17

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I call you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.**

In this passage from John, Jesus connects his work and relationship with his disciples to God, the Father, and subsequently their relationship to God and to each other. God's love for his Son, Jesus, translates to Jesus' love for the disciples, their love for each other, and to all others. Jesus also makes it clear that the disciples are not servants, but co-workers, specifically chosen to share the Good News of love and salvation. He also acknowledges them as friends and foreshadows the extent of his love by one who “lays down his life for his friends.” And as Jesus' friends and co-workers, he assures them that he has shared “everything I learned from my Father” and that they will receive whatever they ask from the Father. Jesus has commissioned his disciples: Love one another and share God's love with the world.

**We Pray:** *Our Lord, who is in us here on earth, let us do your will; standing up when all are*

*sitting down, and raising our voices when all are silent. Give us the perseverance and solidarity to look for love, even if the path has not yet been trodden, even if we fall; to share your gracious love with all your people.*

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**Saturday, September 24, 2022**

Text: Romans 8:35-39

**Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword. As it is written:**

**“For your sake we face death all day long, we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else is all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

This text from Paul's letter to the Romans emphasizes the centrality of Christ's love in the lives of the Christian community in Rome and in our lives today. Bonhoeffer also writes that the Christian community, i.e., the church, is the embodiment of Christ in the world – and thus bears a responsibility to emulate God's love “that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” However, in Paul's letter he also emphasizes that while nothing will “separate us from the love of Christ,” we will not necessarily escape various hardships such as war, famine, and persecution. And we may even experience persecution and be singled out as “sheep to be slaughtered.” However, he consoles us and allays our fears by emphasizing that there is truly nothing “in all creation” that “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.” As so many of us, our neighbors at home and around the world, have experienced extreme weather, famine and wars, may we continue to trust in God's abiding love.

**We Pray:** *As we enter the Fall and leave behind a summer when so many have suffered from extreme weather, droughts and floods and now shortages of food, may we find hope in the promise of God's love and protection. May we continue to pray for all those in need and provide our support and assistance.*

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