



HOPE STARTS HERE

April 20-25, 2020

As we face this challenging time of social distancing, we want to join in daily devotionals, structured around our church's Core Values, to encourage us in our walk with God. We invite you to open by reading the Bible passage(s) for each day, then read the devotional text. Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture and the text. Then close in prayer, including the prompt for each day but adding the praises and prayers that are on your own heart. May God bless his people through this time as we seek his face together!

April 20—Found People Find People

Pastor Geoff Schultz

A STRANGE TIME

[Amos 3:6-10](#)

Our present situation still feels like a strange dream from which I'll awaken and say, "My, that was odd." Plagues are something you read about in the Bible or an old book, something in the Middle Ages, perhaps.

But here we are, our modern world brought to a halt by something we can't see, our great economic engine frozen by an unseen malevolent DNA. These days and the days ahead will almost certainly be the strangest days of our lives. At least we hope so.

The prophet Amos records "When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?" Somewhere in our theology, we have to make room that God in the midst of this crisis is up to something; he wants to speak to us.

One of the blessings of this time, for many of us, is a great pause in our activity. We can fritter away our time, of course, by watching Netflix, listening to the incessant roar of cable news or playing online Scrabble.

But what if we took this time to study Scripture, pray more, meditate and listen to his voice? Perhaps this strange time, and for some, even painful time, can be *the* time when we come to know him. And if we are open to his leading, perhaps he will use us in helping others to come to know him too.

Prayer prompt: Holy Spirit, open our hearts to you today. Lead us to know you more, and show us how we can proclaim you to others.

“FATHER, GLORIFY YOUR NAME”

[John 12:20-29](#)

It is just days before Jesus’ crucifixion. He knows what’s coming. In verse 27 we catch a glimpse of what he is thinking and feeling: “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”

Jesus describes what many of us are feeling today: Our hearts are troubled. It is normal. It is human. It encouraging to know that Jesus experienced the same feelings we have right now. And our hearts *should* be troubled by all that is being reported around our nation—COVID-19, sickness and death. But what can we learn from Jesus?

1. “Glorify God’s name” – Jesus declared, “For this very reason I came,” that God’s name would be glorified.” God’s glory was more important than being saved from the persecution and crucifixion that waited for him. Let’s not be reckless in these days with the decisions we make, but are we more concerned with saving our lives than glorifying God?
2. “Following is serving and serving is following” – We all have different roles of service to perform during this crisis. A young person in our church, who was given my mom’s sewing machine a year ago, has been using it to make protective masks. Many volunteers have stepped in to help deliver meals for Meals on Wheels. I am humbled by all the prayer circles that are taking place, for intercession is a form of service.
3. “Our hour has come” – I believe with all my heart that as the body of Christ this is not an hour for us to dread but to shine. As Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” It blesses my heart when I see and hear how the body of Christ is responding in this hour.

In our words, deeds, prayers and worship, may the body of Christ shine and God be glorified.

Prayer prompt: Father, glorify your name through Christ’s body today. Show us how we can serve others with the opportunities and resources you have entrusted to us.

GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

[1 Timothy 3:14-16; Ephesians 2:19-22](#)

“Household” is a word that has taken on new significance in these days. Many of us are spending more time at home than usual. We may be spending that time with family, or, for some of us, we are painfully aware of being a household of one. At times it can feel like our house is holding us—and won’t let go!

Paul reminds Timothy that we are part of a larger household, the household of God, “which is the church of the living God.” The Greek for “church” is *ekklesia*, which means “assembly” or “meeting.”

As we are unable to gather in our church building, it is only more important for us to remember that the church is not held by a house. Instead, as Ephesians 2 pictures, *we* are the house, holding precious assembly with God through the Holy Spirit within us.

1 Timothy 3:16 is probably an early hymn of the church, clearly describing Christ and his ministry. But it’s more. Paul says the poem is “the mystery of godliness.” What does he mean? Godliness is Christ in us, and us in him.

As his body, we are God manifested in the flesh today. We are justified by the Spirit. We are the recipients of the good news “into which angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:12). We proclaim Christ among the nations so that those in the world may believe in him, and we have a great hope of glory. This is a hymn of Christ, *and* it is a hymn of his church.

I should look more and more like Jesus every day, because I am his house, holding his Spirit. Regardless of how big your household is, how is God leading you to demonstrate Christ’s life in you today?

Prayer prompt: Holy Spirit, remind me of your presence in me today. Guide me today that I may change within, looking more and more like Jesus.

DESERT ISLAND

[John 14:15-21](#)

I'm sure you've heard the question, "If you were stranded on a desert island and could choose one person to be with you, who would you choose?" I could never come up with an answer to that question. How do you choose?

If you are an extrovert like me, you probably feel the same way. Not only do I love many different things about many different people, I need them all in my life: People who lift me up when I am down, people who make me laugh, cry with me, keep me in check. I especially need people that need me; it's nice to be needed.

As we read in Genesis 2, God said right from the beginning "It is not good for the man to be alone." We were created with a desire for fellowship. Not just fellowship with one another, however—we were created for fellowship with God.

Jesus told his disciples, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to be with you forever" (John 14:15-16). God didn't just create us with this desire for fellowship and then leave us with an unfulfilled need. He sent his Son and then his Spirit to be with us forever. We are never alone because we are greatly loved. I pray that you take comfort in this today.

But wait... there's more! Don't just sit in that comfort. We are commissioned to do something with it, to take action. We are never alone because we are loved by God, but are there people in your life who may not know him? Maybe they don't have the peace and security that comes from the Father. Maybe you are the one to whom God is saying, "Love them. Don't let them do life alone."

Prayer prompt: God, who it is in my life whom you want me to reach out to, to love better, to share your love with? Strengthen me to do what you ask me to do.

THE STRUGGLE OF GIVING

[2 Corinthians 9:6-13](#)

You might remember a few weeks ago when I said I struggle with selfishness. On the flip side of that is my wife, who is one of the most *selfless* people I've ever met. She is constantly looking for ways to give things up for the sake of others. In fact, just this past Easter weekend, after working all week, she baked and delivered various goods to around 25 different families over the course of a collective 40 hours.

It's one of the things I love most about her, but that wasn't always the case. I used to get so frustrated when she'd want to spend a lot of money or time doing something for someone else. It challenged that selfish part of me in ways I had never experienced: "What about what we want or need to buy? Couldn't your day be better spent doing something fun with me?"

Over time I came to realize two very important things about her, though.

1. Her generosity was not about her at all, but Christ's reflection in her. She loved to give of her time, talents and money because it brought her joy to love and serve others. She knows that everything she has is a gift from God, and seeks to give back accordingly.
2. God had purposely provided me with a mate who would challenge my selfish heart. Despite every sermon I had heard on giving, and even messages I myself had preached, God knew I needed an actual force in my life that would make me see true, selfless, cheerful giving in action. Because I have learned to embrace this, my own giving heart has grown since I've known her, and I now find joy in her joy.

Are we cheerfully giving in this season, or allowing our discomfort to dictate our actions? Are we holding back because we don't know what tomorrow will hold? If so, we have to ask ourselves, where does our faith truly lie? Cheerfully give in whatever ways the Lord has provided to you, that you might more accurately reflect the character of Christ and lead others to him.

Prayer prompt: Father, help me to give cheerfully and abundantly from what you have provided me, that I might find true joy in you and lead others to you.

UNPLUG

[Genesis 1:1-2:3](#)

Just a few months ago we could confidently say our world was obsessed with social media, that people spent far too much time staring at a screen. It was common to hear comments about the lack of in-person interaction or basic conversation skills because technology took away the need for both. Whether you grew up with a record player, boombox, Walkman, iPod or Spotify, you can see that technology has had a lasting impact.

Put that alongside the current world-changing event and you've got an interesting pair. In the last month most of our lives have been filled with work, schooling, fellowship, video meetings, Netflix, church and the news... all on a screen. We've gone from being addicted to our screens to being dependent on them.

I can't speak for others, but I am burned out of the screen time. Rev. Matt Young from Westminster Presbyterian Church in Texas says, "this kind of burnout we are experiencing is a soul-deep fatigue... it's not something an ordinary nap can fix."

Our restoration is not dependent on getting to a "new normal" but on realizing that whatever our lives consist of, we always need a day to put everything aside and rest in the peace that I Am is on the throne.

God rested not because he needed to, but because he knew it was good.

Alive people worship Jesus—and we can't be alive unless we put our screens down and let him fill us up.

Prayer prompt: Jesus, give us the willpower to unplug and find genuine rest in you.

Join us for our live-streamed service at 10 a.m. Sunday!

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