

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
THE SEASON AFTER
PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

October 8 - October 14

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Proper 23

Every day is filled with invitations to choose God or something less. Easy days, difficult days, school days, vacation days, work days, rest days, sick days, and well days—all burst with opportunities to receive and embrace or reject and exclude the living God.

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet in the Gospel text of Matthew 22:1-14 and the Story of the Golden Calf in the Old Testament reading of Exodus 32:1-14 both illustrate the reality of the choice given to us by God himself. Jesus' parable needs to be held together with the Parable of the Two Sons and the Parable of the Tenants (Mt 21:28-44) because the three stories were told to confront the religious and political establishment of his day. Jesus confronted the authorities for rejecting God's invitation to obey and for choosing their own way.

A fascinating aspect of these parables is that they are a type of autobiography for the Jewish people and Jesus. They trace the unfortunate history of how God's people repeatedly rejected his invitation to repentance and intimacy extended through his prophets. This is why the leaders "knew he was talking about him" (v. 45) and "looked for a way to arrest him" (v. 46). Jesus was a threat to their authority and autonomy.

Remember that everything Jesus did was in love. These confrontive parables were an effort to expose the welcoming heart of God and reveal the consequences of rejecting him. Jesus wanted the stubborn, arrogant, selfish, and greedy religious and political leaders of his day to repent and believe (v. 32), become the kind of people who produce the fruit of the kingdom (v. 43), and receive the invitation to the kingdom party (Mt 22:4). Jesus wanted them to know that God had so much more for them than what they were finding with their current sinful pattern of choices.

In Exodus 32:1-14 the people also had a choice: Wait patiently for the God who had delivered them from slavery and provided for them in the desert or impulsively follow their own selfish desires. Aaron, one of their leaders, had a choice too: Lead with courage or cave to the crowd. Psalm 106:20 describes their unfortunate decision like this: "They exchanged their glorious God for an image of a bull, which eats grass." That is a haunting picture of sin: Swapping God's glory for a grass eater.



Think about your own sins. Sin is living below the glory for which God created and redeemed you. Every lie told, every judgmental or racist word expressed, every lustful or gluttonous act taken, every grudge held, every compassionate act withheld, every curse uttered, every promise broken—all sins are rejections of God’s invitation to receive and embrace his glory.

The reason the gospel is so radical is that God sent his son to die for the human race who has repeatedly rejected him and his glory. Jesus is the open invitation to all to come and live in his story of love and grace. In God’s glory story, we daily choose to tell the truth, speak encouragement, resist lust and gluttony, freely forgive, compassionately share with those in need, keep our promises, and anything else that is “excellent or praiseworthy” (Phil 4:8).

FOR *reflection*

First, think back: Is there a habit or pattern of thinking that is below the glory that God has for you? Join the psalmist in saying, “I have sinned, even as my ancestors did” (Ps 106:6).

Second, think forward: How is God inviting me to live in his glory? What habit or pattern of thinking is he inviting me into?

Reflect on Paul’s invitation to joy and peace in Philippians 4:4-8 as guidance to living in the glory story God has written for you.



SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday	Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Exodus 24:1-8; 1 Peter 5:1-5, 12-14
Friday	Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Exodus 24:9-11; James 4:4-10
Saturday	Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Exodus 24:12-18; Mark 2:18-22
Sunday	Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Exodus 32:1-14; Isaiah 25:1-9; Psalm 23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:1-14
Monday	Psalm 97; Exodus 32:15-35; Jude 17-25
Tuesday	Psalm 97; Exodus 33:1-6; Philippians 3:13-4:1
Wednesday	Psalm 97; 2 Kings 17:7-20; John 6:25-35

Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

The Morning Liturgy

Opening Scripture

For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

Isaiah 57:15

Opening Prayer *(based on Psalm 51)*

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

Scripture Reading *(read Psalm and Gospel text here)*

Period of Silence

Confessing Our Faith *(Apostles' Creed)*

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect *(Proper 23)*

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

A Midday Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. *Amen.*

An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen.*

A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. *Amen.*

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let Your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let Your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



