

THE LIVING
WORD
OF
THE SEASON AFTER
PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

September 3 - September 9

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Proper 18

People are complicated, aren't they? How each of us got where we are is a complicated process—a series of events outside of our control, a lifetime of decisions within our control, a web of healthy and unhealthy relationships, the impact of local and global economy, the ripple effect of education or lack thereof.

The Old Testament readings for this season follow the Israelites' deliverance from slavery to Egypt. How the Israelites became enslaved by the Egyptians was complicated. They originally came to Egypt seeking refuge during a regional famine (Gen 46-47). As time went on, their relationship with Egypt nosedived into an oppressive enslavement (Ex 1). But God compassionately entered their complicated story with deliverance. Through Moses' leadership and the plagues, God slowly but surely loosened the grip of the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ex 7-12).

The final plague was distinct from the previous, because in the Passover, God not only acted on behalf of the Israelites and in judgment against the Egyptian gods (Ex 12:12), but also involved the Israelites in their own deliverance. The instructions given in Exodus 12:1-14 invited them to participate through sacrifice and celebration, and to be ready to run when the plague struck Egypt.

As great as the deliverance from Egypt was for the Israelites, even greater is the deliverance for all humanity made available through Jesus. He entered the complicated human story in order to deliver humanity from the oppression of sin. Not only that, but he came to involve us in the deliverance.

The gospel passage for this week, Matthew 18:15-20, is compassionate and practical advice for disciples who have been hurt or harmed by another disciple. But before applying these practical steps, disciples need to keep in mind the parable of the Shepherd that comes right before this (vv. 12-14). Our God is searching for the wandering. His heart is for the lost.

Thus, each level of confrontation that Jesus gives in Matthew 18:15-20 needs to be taken in the love of the Shepherd, remembering that we have a "continuing debt to love one another" (Rom 13:8). Our ultimate desire in confrontation



needs to align with God's ultimate desire for rescue and redemption. This is why after the first three steps are taken, the offended is to treat the offender like a pagan or tax collector. How did Jesus interact with pagans and tax collectors? He welcomed and helped them.

Praise God that no person is too complicated for his compassionate rescue. No sin is too terrible for Jesus to forgive. No story is too twisted up for the Spirit to unravel.

FOR *reflection*

Do you have a relationship where you need to address a harm or hurt? Allow the Spirit to confront you with how your actions have harmed others before praying for the one who has offended you. Remind yourself that God is pursuing them like a Shepherd.

If possible, contact them, and before you share your hurt or concern, share God's heart and compassion. Then move into discussing how their actions have caused harm and how you desire to reconcile.

May God grant you his redemptive vision and fill you with the love of a rescuing shepherd.



SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday	Psalm 149; Exodus 9:1-7; 2 Corinthians 12:11-21
Friday	Psalm 149; Exodus 10:21-29; Romans 10:15b-21
Saturday	Psalm 149; Exodus 11:1-10; Matthew 23:29-36
Sunday	Psalm 149; Exodus 12:1-14; Ezekiel 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20
Monday	Psalm 121; Exodus 12:14-28; 1 Peter 2:11-17
Tuesday	Psalm 121; Exodus 12:29-42; Romans 13:1-7
Wednesday	Psalm 121; Exodus 13:1-10; Matthew 21:18-22

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

I was glad when they said unto me, "We will go into the house of the Lord."

Psalm 122:1

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 18)*

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

A Midday Prayer

Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms. Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your mercies' sake. *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

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your 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.



