

## June 1 Galatians 6:7-10

Do not deceive yourselves; no one makes a fool of God,  
for you reap whatever you sow.  
If you plant in the field of your natural desires,  
from it you will gather the harvest of death;  
if you plant in the field of the Spirit,  
from the Spirit you will gather the harvest of eternal life.

So let us not grow weary in doing what is right,  
for we will reap at harvest time,  
if we do not give up.

So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all,  
and especially for those of the family of faith.

\* Since no one makes a fool of God, what is it that you are planting?

\* What opportunities do we continue to have to work for the good of all? How might our working to up-build the family of faith also sow seeds of the spirit in the world?

*O God, we do grow weary, yet not weary of you. Work in us every good deed that through our labor we together in Christ might reap your harvest. May we not grow weary in well-doing! In Christ, Amen.*

## June 2 Galatians 6:11-18

See what large letters I make  
when I am writing in my own hand!

Those who want to make a good showing try to compel you to be circumcised  
so they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.  
May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.  
Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything;  
but a new creation is everything!  
As for those who will follow this rule—  
peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one make trouble for me;  
for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

\* How does trying to compel someone else to follow a certain practice or ritual avoid the cross of Christ?

\* Circumcision and uncircumcision are central issues for Paul in writing to the Galatians. Why? What is a “new creation”? For the Gentiles? For the “Israel of God”?

\* How might we carry the marks of Jesus? What would they be?

*We bless one another:  
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.*

## June 3

### Ephesians 1:1-10

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus;  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

\* To whom have you written (phone, e-mail, text, card) to encourage in faith?

God chose us for adoption as God's children through Jesus Christ.  
This was God's pleasure and purpose, freely given to us in the Beloved.  
Let us praise God for grace, for the free gift in Jesus Christ!

In Christ we have redemption through his blood.  
We are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.  
How great is the grace of God, lavished on us.  
With all wisdom and insight  
God made known to us the mystery of God's own will  
set forth in Christ  
as a plan for the fullness of time,  
to gather up all things in heaven and on earth.

\* Here is the core of the Gospel. What does it mean to you that:  
You have been chosen, adopted because God wanted to?  
You have been redeemed, forgiven, set free through Christ?  
You know the mystery of God's own will and plan for you?  
And for all things in the fullness of time?

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before God in love. Amen*

## June 4

### Ephesians 1:11-14

In Christ, we have also obtained an inheritance,  
having been destined according to the purpose of the one  
who accomplished all things according to divine counsel and will,  
so that we, who were first to set our hope on Christ,  
might live for the praise of God's glory.  
When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,  
and had believed in him,  
you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;  
this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption  
as God's own people  
to the praise of God's glory.

\* What does it mean in your life that you have been promised an inheritance from God? What is that, really? How do you share and hand on this promise? (Or is it just for you, because you were destined to receive it?)

\* Christ accomplished all things according to the purpose and plan of God. What are some of the dilemmas that arise when trying to discern God's will? How does having all those decisions centered in Christ change the discernment?

\* How does your daily life look when, placing your hope in Christ, you give the glory to God?

\* We have been marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. How does it feel to be marked? Sealed? Just how does the Holy Spirit work in your life?

*Questions, questions! And, yet our hope in you, O God, is greater still. We praise you for gathering us into your grace, for marking us in holy baptism, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Fill us with your grace to love and to live for others. In Christ, Amen.*

## June 5 Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus  
and your love toward all the saints.

I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give you a spirit of wisdom  
and revelation as you come to know him,  
so, with the eyes of your heart enlightened,  
you may know the hope to which God has called you,  
what are the riches of God's glorious inheritance among the saints,  
and what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power  
for us who believe, according to the working of God's great power.

God put this power to work in Christ by raising him from the dead  
and seating him at God's right hand in the heavenly places,  
far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,  
and above every name that is named,  
not only in this age but also in the age to come.

God has put all things under Christ's feet  
and made him head over all things for the church,  
which is his body, the fullness of God who fills all in all.

\* When have you seen and felt the power of God at work through Christ's  
resurrection?

\* What does it mean that Christ is above all rule, authority, power and  
dominion, and head "over all things for the church"?

*O God, who has given us Christ Jesus, we pray in his name for wisdom and  
hope that we who are Christ's body, the church, might live in the power of his  
resurrection alone. Amen.*

## June 6 Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived,  
following the course of the world, following the ruler of the power of the air,  
the spirit that controls those who disobey.

All of us once lived in the passions, following our desires,  
and we were children of wrath, like everyone else.

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of great love,  
loved us, even when we were dead in sin through our trespasses,  
made us alive together with Christ  
—by grace you have been saved—  
and raised us up with Christ  
and seated us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,  
so that in ages to come God might show immeasurable riches of grace in  
kindness toward us in Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith,  
and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—  
not the result of works, so that no one may boast.  
For we are what God made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

\* When do you experience being dead through sin, and being children of  
wrath?

\* What does it mean for you that we have been made alive *together* in Christ?

\* What are the open possibilities since we have been created in Christ Jesus  
for good works, which God prepared before hand to be *our way of life*?

*Write upon our hearts: "By grace you have been saved through faith, and this  
is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no  
one may boast." In Christ we have our very being. Amen.*

## June 7 Ephesians 2:11-18

Remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”

—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—

remember that you were at that time without Christ,  
being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel  
and strangers to the covenants of promise.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off  
have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- \* What differences, created by human beings, divide us today?
- \* In what ways have we been aliens of community or strangers to the promise?

For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one,  
and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

Christ has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances,  
that he might create one new humanity, in place of the two,  
thus making peace, and reconciling both groups to God in one body,  
through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Christ came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off  
and peace to those who were near.

- \* In church conflict, what walls have divided us? How does hostility grow?
- \* How does the power of the cross reconcile both groups to God and to one another? How have you seen that? Felt it? How might the Spirit bring reconciliation, even now?

*We, too, O Lord, were far off and have been brought near. Help us to remember this, when we start to estrange others, creating hostility. Forgive us. Show us again Christ's cross and resurrection that we might surely know the peace you bring both to those who were far off and to those who are near. In his name we pray, Amen.*

## June 8 Ephesians 2:18-22

Through Christ both of us, Jews and Gentiles,  
are able in the one Spirit to come into the presence of God.

So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens,  
but you are citizens with the saints  
and also members of the household of God,  
built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,  
with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone.

In Christ the whole structure is joined together  
and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;  
in whom you also are built together spiritually  
into a dwelling place for God.

- \* Consider all of the images of the church in this passage!

\*The church is people, global and historical. How has your faith community experienced being no longer strangers and aliens? Citizens with the saints?

\* The church is people, not just a building. But in this passage how are the people likened to being a building? How are we built together spiritually to be a dwelling place for God?

*We praise your name, holy God, that through the power of the Spirit we are able, together, to come into your presence. Ground us, build us, form us into a people with doors wide open so that none need be outside. In Christ, Amen.*

## June 9 Ephesians 3:1-13

I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles. Surely you have heard of the commission of God's grace given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind as it has been revealed to apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

I became a servant of the Gospel by God's grace given by God's power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see the plan of the mystery hidden for the ages in God who created all things: so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to rulers and authorities in heavenly places. In accord with the eternal purpose, God carried this out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith.

I pray therefore: Do not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

\* Paul has been a prisoner, both literally and for Christ. He tells the Ephesians, Gentiles, his sufferings are for them. How do we interpret our own sufferings?

\* How have you—by God's power—become a servant of the Gospel? What boldness and confidence has been given to you? For what purpose?

*God of mystery, you have made known to us your revelation. May we who now have access to you in Jesus Christ be your disciples, your prophets, your leaders that all might know your marvelous grace. In Christ, Amen.*

## June 10 Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before God, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

\* In the words of Paul pray with and for individuals and communities *you* know:

I pray that, according to the riches of God's glory, God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through the Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with the fullness of God.

\* What words might you use to pray a similar prayer, but in language common to the person with whom you are praying?

Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

## June 11 Ephesians 4:1-10

I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit,  
just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
one God and Father of all, who is above all  
and through all and in all.

Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.  
Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive;  
he gave gifts to his people" (Ps. 68:18)  
(When it says, "He ascended," what does that mean  
but that he had also descended into the lowest depths of the earth?  
He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens,  
so that he might fill all things.)

\* What is the measure of Christ's gift? If through Jesus' birth, death, resurrection and ascension he filled all things, is not this "measure" full for each and for all?

\* What does it mean in your life that captivity itself is now captive?

\* Read again "One body, one Spirit..." Let your mind expand. What does—what might—that mean for our faith, life, worship, and work together in Christ?

*May we, Christ Jesus, lead lives centered in and shaped by you. Spirit of Gentleness, fill us with humility and patience that we may bear with one another in love and maintain unity in the bond of peace. Amen.*

## June 12 Ephesians 4:11-14

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...

\* To equip the saints for the work of ministry! Did you notice that the list of roles is not ranked and it is not closed? How do ministerial offices relate to one another? What is needed?

\* What difference does it—might it—make that whatever offices and roles the church has, the purpose of these leadership ministries is to equip the baptized for their ministries in the world?

\* When each and every one of the *laos*, the people of God, are equipped and fully engaged in their ministries in daily life all week long, how does that build up the body of Christ? How do we—might we—strengthen this body through word and sacrament, teaching and learning?

...until all of us come to the unity of the faith  
and of the knowledge of the Son of God,  
to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

*We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.*

\* When have you experienced Christians being tossed and blown about? How did that come about? What happened? How do we grow to maturity in faith and to full stature in Christ?

*May we, Christ Jesus, be your body in the world, growing in knowledge, strengthened in ability to be fully engaged in mission and ministry, calling each other to mutual accountability for belief and action, led by wise leaders, confident in the unity you alone give. In your name we pray, Amen.*

## June 13 Ephesians 4:15-16

Speaking the truth in love,  
we must grow up in every way  
into him who is the head, into Christ,  
from whom the whole body, joined and knit together  
by every ligament with which is it equipped,  
as each part is working properly,  
promotes the body's growth  
in building itself up in love.

\* How does speaking the truth in love help Christ's body, the church, grow up?

\* What is church growth? What does it mean to grow up into Christ, the head of the body? How many different ways might a faith community be growing? How might your faith community grow in knowledge? In mercy? In outreach? In service? In ecumenical relationships? In \_\_\_? In \_\_\_?

\* When the body is broken, ripped apart, torn down, how do you weep with Christ? Where have you seen the body of Christ being knit together? How does our being joined together in love, even in the midst of great conflict, help us equip one another for Christ's mission in the world?

\* What does it mean for the body of Christ to be working properly? What difference does it make that Christ is the head of the body? How is it that through engaging in God's mission, Christ builds the church?

*Christ Jesus, the head of the church, through your great love, knit us together again. Recreate us by the power of the resurrection for cooperation and collaboration. May we grow by your grace. In your name we pray, Amen.*

## June 14 Ephesians 4:17-24

Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord:  
you must no longer live as the Gentiles live,  
in the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding,  
alienated from God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.  
They have lost sensitivity and abandoned themselves to licentiousness,  
greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

\* What is it to live in futility? Darkened understanding? Greedy practice?

That is not the way you learned in Christ!  
For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him,  
as truth is in Jesus.

You were taught to put away your former way of life,  
your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts,  
and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,  
and to clothe yourselves with the new self,  
created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

\* What is it like to be renewed in spirit? Clothed with a new self? Living in the likeness of God?

*Create us anew, righteous and holy God. Turn us from ways of life that delude and corrupt. Clothe us with Christ that we might live in your likeness not only for our own appearance, but so that people may see you through our service. In Christ, Amen.*



## June 15 Ephesians 4:25-32

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors,  
for we are members of one another.  
Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,  
and do not make room for the devil.

Thieves must give up stealing;  
rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands,  
so as to have something to share with the needy.

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths,  
but only what is useful for building up, as there is need,  
so that your words may give grace to those who hear.  
Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,  
with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger  
and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,  
and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
as God in Christ has forgiven you.

- \* Select one sentence from the rich words above. Savor it. Let it become part of you.
- \* Pick another one, for later in the day. How might it change your living?

*Holy Spirit, mark us anew this day with the seal of Christ. By your power, sanctify our lives by freeing us from our own falsehood, anger and evil. Fill us with yourself so that we might speak helpful words and build up the church with grace and tenderhearted kindness. May we live together in the forgiveness which comes through Christ Jesus alone. Amen.*

## June 16 Ephesians 5:1-14

Be imitators of God, as beloved children,  
and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us,  
a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Fornication, impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you.  
Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk;  
but instead let there be thanksgiving.  
No fornicator, impure or greedy person (that is, an idolater)  
has inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

\* How does not being part of God's kingdom hinge on being an idolater? How is living in love dependent upon being one with Christ who sacrificed himself for us?

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things,  
the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient.  
Don't be associated with them.  
Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.  
Live as children of light—  
for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.  
Take no part in unfruitful works of darkness; instead expose them.  
Everything exposed by the light becomes visible.  
And everything that becomes visible is light.

\* What role do we have in exposing darkness? In illuminating truth?

*We pray with Paul, "Wake up sleeper, and rise from death, and Christ will shine on you." Amen.*



## June 17

### Ephesians 5:15-20

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise,  
making the most of the time, because the days are evil.  
Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

\* Be careful! Make the most of the time! What does that mean? (Surely not a stressed-out, 24/7 existence!)

\* What are the evils of our day in relation to time? How might the Spirit be calling us from foolishness to wisdom in seeking to understand the will of the Lord?

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery;  
but be filled with the Spirit,  
as you sing psalms and hymns  
and spiritual songs among yourselves,  
singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts,  
giving thanks to God at all times and for everything  
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

\* When we sing, what does it feel like to be filled with the Spirit? When we make music together, how does the melody of the psalms and the hymns draw our hearts to the Lord?

\* When have you felt an almost intoxicating joy in giving thanks to God for everything?

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God all creatures here below. Praise God above you heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

## June 18

### Ephesians 5:25-33

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.  
Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord.  
The husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.  
Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church,  
and gave himself for her to make her holy by cleansing her  
with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church without  
spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind –  
yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.  
In the same way husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies.  
He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body,  
but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church,  
because we are members of his body.

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)  
This is a great mystery I am applying to Christ and the church.  
Each of you should love his wife as himself and a wife should respect her husband.

\* How has the comparison of Christ as head of the church to husbands led some men to lord it over their wives? How has this admonition led some wives into submission or abuse? How have church leaders often fostered such unhealthy relationships?

\* How has this changed? And not changed? How does referring to the church as “her” contribute to the continuation of the submissive role of women?

\* What might we glean from this text today about Christ’s great love for all people that could contribute to our mutual love and respect for one another?

*Christ Jesus, we thank you for your great love for the church. May we who are members of your body, love ourselves as you love us, and love one another as you care for and nurture us. And may we feel so cared for by your great love that we turn outward beyond our own families to love and nurture the world. Amen.*

## June 19

### Ephesians 6:1-9

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.  
“Honor your father and mother”(Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) --  
This is the first commandment with a promise:  
“so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”  
And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,  
But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling,  
in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ;  
not only while being watched, and in order to please them,  
but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord, not to men and women,  
knowing that whatever good we do,  
we will receive the same again from the Lord,  
whether we are slaves or free.

And masters, do the same to them.  
Stop threatening them,  
for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven,  
and with God there is no partiality.

\* Within the social structure of that day, how are these words radical? How would, “Fathers, don’t provoke your children to anger,” and, “Masters, stop threatening [slaves]” be heard?  
\* How have these words been used through the centuries and yet today to justify patriarchy and slavery?  
\* How does being a slave of Christ...all of us...change the relationships we have with one another? What do the words, “with God there is no partiality” really mean? What new possibilities for inclusivity and justice do they open up for us? How do you, or might you, participate in freedom-seeking ministry?

*Lord God, may we do your will from our hearts. May we see each other only through Christ. Give us the courage to do not only our duty, but that which liberates people from whatever oppressive systems they find themselves in today. In Christ we pray. Amen.*

## June 20

### Ephesians 6:10-17

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of God’s power.  
Put on the whole armor of God,  
so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.  
Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh,  
but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers of this present darkness,  
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God,  
so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day,  
and having done everything, to stand firm.  
Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist,  
and put on the breastplate of righteousness.  
Put on shoes that will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

With these, take the shield of faith  
to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.  
Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,  
which is the word of God.

\* Even though the struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but cosmic forces of evil, ponder the ways Christians have used this passage to justify warfare against peoples and nations.

\* What is the power of the Lord? And for what are we called to use it? Visualize yourself in a belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes for peace, shield of faith, headgear of faith and, with tools of the Spirit, the word of God? What do you look like in the mirror? To others? In ministry?

*Lord of power and truth, clothe us with the Spirit that we may stand firm in the face of evil. We repent of times we have gone to battle assuming our enemies were yours. We ask for wisdom to know your truth and to walk in your ways of justice and peace. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.*

## June 21 Ephesians 6:18-23

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.  
Keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.  
Pray also for me, so a message may be given to me  
to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,  
for which I am an ambassador in chains.  
Pray that I declare it boldly, as I must speak.

- \* Do you know who is praying for you? Perhaps someone you don't even know? Whom might you *ask* to pray for you? For what should they pray?
- \* Are there people you tell, "I'm praying for you," and then you don't? What prayer discipline could assist you?
- \* Peter and John, when ordered not to teach in the name of Jesus, said, "we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4: 20) What about you?

So you may know how I am and what I am doing,  
dear brother and faithful minister, Tychicus, will tell you everything.  
I send him to let you know how we are and to encourage your hearts.

- \* The whole community, far and near, needs to know how each is doing. How might we keep in touch more? How might we encourage one another's hearts?

*May peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## June 22 Philippians 1:1-11

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.  
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi,  
with the bishops and deacons:  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God every time I remember you,  
constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,  
because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.  
I am confident the one who began a good work among you  
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.  
You hold me in your heart for all of you share in God's grace with me,  
both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

God is my witness, how I long for all of you  
with the compassion of Christ Jesus.  
This is my prayer: that your love may overflow more and more  
with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best,  
so that in the day of Jesus Christ you may be pure and blameless,  
having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through  
Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

- \* Whom do you long to see? Whom do you hold in your heart with the compassion of Jesus Christ? For whom do you thank God? How might you let them know this?
- \* What harvest of righteousness is God producing in faith communities you know?
- \* How do Christians help one another have the insight to determine what is best to do, how to make decisions, how to share the gospel? How might we be bold enough to speak often about the fruits of the faith?

*May grace and peace be with us all in Jesus Christ that we might constantly pray for one another, that you ,oh God, who began a good work among us, will bring it to completion in Christ. Amen.*

## June 23 Philippians 1:12-18

I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me  
has actually helped to spread the gospel,  
so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard  
and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ.  
Most brothers and sisters, having been made confident by my imprisonment,  
dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

\* Are you in prison? Do you know someone in prison? Whichever state, how  
are we made bold and fearless through Jesus Christ to speak and live the word  
of God?

Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill.  
These proclaim Christ out of love,  
knowing that I have been put here for defense of the Gospel;  
others out of selfish ambition,  
intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment.

What does it matter?  
Just this: that Christ is proclaimed in every way, out of false motives or true;  
and in that I rejoice.

\* Ah, the complexities of human motivation. When have you been envious,  
selfishly ambitious (perhaps without even fully realizing it)? Have there been  
times when we have actually intended to increase another's suffering? Surely  
not, we say. But, perhaps, even a little?

\* What does it matter?

*God, who knows the human heart, free us from ourselves. Forgive us. Increase  
love and goodwill within us, in every circumstance. May Christ Jesus  
continue to be proclaimed through, in spite of, or in the midst of our mixed  
motivations. In Christ alone we rejoice. Amen.*

## June 24 Philippians 1:19-26

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers  
and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ  
this will turn out for my deliverance.  
It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame,  
but by speaking boldly, Christ will be exalted in my body,  
whether by life or by death.

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.  
If I continue to live, that means fruitful labor for me;  
I do not know which I prefer.  
I am hard pressed between the two:  
my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better;  
but to remain alive is more necessary for you.

I know that I will remain and continue with all of you  
for your progress and joy in faith,  
so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus  
when I come to you again.

\* For what might we pray so that our work will turn out for "deliverance"?  
Could it be that our lives are more important to people than we might realize?

\* Have you, or someone you know, been torn between wishing to be fully with  
Christ and living a longer life? Have you been torn between staying and  
leaving a calling? To whom might you turn to help discern God's will for your  
life? For your work?

*God of discernment, you know when we are hard pressed. Deliver your  
servants who are in bondage or any kind of danger. May we seek your  
guidance through wise people in the community of Christ as we question your  
will for our lives of service. In Christ we pray. Amen.*

## June 25

### Philippians 1:27-30

Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,  
so that whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you,  
I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit,  
striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel,  
and are in no way intimidated by your opponents.  
For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation.  
This is God's doing.

- \* Who are our opponents in the faith? What does it take to stand firm?
- \* How do we live life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ?

God has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ,  
but of suffering for him as well—  
since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had  
and hear that I still have.

- \* Without sinking into self-sacrifice—Christ's sacrifice is already complete—how are we privileged to suffer for Christ and for the sake of suffering humankind?

*Whether we are present with one another, or absent, join us as one in Christ for mutual encouragement and accountability that we might stand fast in the faith. We give you thanks for the privilege of believing and serving and struggling in your name and for your sake, Jesus. Amen.*

## June 26

### Philippians 2:1-4

If there is any encouragement in Christ,  
any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit,  
any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete:  
be of the same mind, having the same love,  
being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,  
but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

Let each of you look not to your own interests,  
but to the interests of others.

- \* Not in *order to be* loved by God, but because we are unconditionally loved by God in Christ, we, by the power of the Spirit, can be of the same love, having the same mind. When have you seen that “mind of Christ” in someone? Or “being in full accord and of one mind” in the Christian community?

- \* Each of us may have our own fears, habits, particular versions of sin that draw us back to acting out of selfish ambition or conceit. What are they? How does being joined to Christ free us to act humbly, and to regard others in the image of Christ?

- \* How have you experienced encouragement in Christ? Consolation? Sympathy and compassion? Sharing in the Spirit? How is our joy completed? How is it shared?

*God of mercy and love, forgive us, free us, and fill us so that we live in Christ and through Christ for one another. Amen.*

**June 27**  
**Philippians 2:5-11**

\* Read this “mind of Christ” passage and make it your own:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

Being found in human form, he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the death,  
and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

May this mind be in us so that we might be joined to the cross and resurrection of Christ. May every knee bend and every tongue confess that Jesus is Christ is Lord. Amen.

**June 28**  
**Philippians 2:12-18**

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me,  
not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence,  
work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;  
for it is God who is at work in you,  
enabling you both to will and work for God’s good pleasure.

\* “Work out your own salvation” taken out of context could sound like works righteousness; but coming right after the “mind of Christ” passage, what might it mean for how Christ can live in our lives? How does “God is at work in you” both encourage and challenge?

Do all things without murmuring and arguing  
so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God  
without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,  
in which you shine like stars in the world.

By your holding fast to the word of life I can be proud of you  
on the day of Christ, showing that I did not labor in vain.  
But even if I am being poured out like a libation  
over the sacrifice and offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you—  
and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

\* Does the labor of your ministry sometimes seem in vain? Do you feel like you are being “poured out” and left empty? For what do you pray?

*May we and the people among whom we serve hold fast to our faith in you, faithful God. Shape our lives in Christ that we might will and work for you alone. Amen.*

## June 29 Philippians 2:19-30

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon,  
so that I may be cheered by news of you.  
I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.  
All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ,  
but Timothy's worth you know,  
how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.  
I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.

Still, I think it necessary to send Epaphroditus—my brother and co-worker and  
fellow soldier, your messenger and minister to my need;  
he has been longing for all of you,  
and distressed because you heard that he was ill.  
He was so ill he nearly died.

But God had mercy on him, but not only on him, but on me also  
so I would not have one sorrow after another.  
I am eager to send him that you may rejoice and I may be less anxious.

Welcome him in the Lord with all joy and honor such people,  
because he came close to death for the work of Christ,  
risking his life for the service you could not give me.

\* What basic differences are there between those who serve for their own  
interests and those who are genuinely concerned for the community of Christ?

\* Whom do you know who has been put at risk for the work of Christ?  
(Yourself?)

\* How might we send messengers and ministers to one another?

*God of community, we give you thanks for those who have been sent to us.  
May we welcome them in the Lord. And may we also send forth faithful  
servants for service in Christ. It is through your love that we long to see one  
another. May we see Christ in each other. Amen.*

## June 30 Philippians 3:1-11

My brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.  
To write some things to you is not troublesome,  
and for you it is a safeguard.

Beware of the dogs, of evil workers, of those who mutilate the flesh!  
It is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God  
and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh—  
even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.  
If anyone has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more:  
I was circumcised on the eighth day, an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin,  
a Hebrew, a Pharisee, a zealous persecutor of the church,  
and righteous under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I regard as loss because of Christ.  
I regard everything as loss  
because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ my Lord.  
For his sake I suffered the loss of all things and regard them as rubbish,  
in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him,  
not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law  
but the righteousness from God that comes through faith in Christ.

All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection,  
to share in his sufferings, and become like him in the face of death,  
in the hope that I might be raised from death to life.

\* What—your knowledge, your accomplishments, your position, your role—is  
rubbish in your life?

\* How does faith in Christ surpass everything else in value?

*May we know you alone, Christ Jesus. We place ourselves and our hope in  
you. Keep us from false security. Having been joined to your death through  
baptism, may we continue to live by the power of your resurrection forever.  
Amen.*