

## November 1

### James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,  
if you say you have faith but do not have works?  
Can faith save you?

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,  
and one of you says to them,  
“Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,”  
and yet you do not supply their bodily needs,  
what is the good of that?

So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

\* We believe and profess that we are justified by grace alone through faith, not by our works. How is this passage from James, though sounding the opposite, not contradictory?

\* How can faith be dead? Just as faith and works cannot be separated, how are these verses inseparable? What does faith without works look like? What do works without faith look like?

\* Picture a brother or sister hearing the words, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat your fill,” without their having food and clothing and housing. Such a picture is all too common in this world. Perhaps that has been you. What does that feel like? What kind of a Gospel is one hearing? Picture Jesus: What did he say? What did he do?

*Holy God, you have given us the gift of faith to believe in Christ Jesus. We thank you for all the saints who have loved the world. Give us the gift of loving hearts that by our works people will see our faith and see Christ. Amen.*

## November 2

### James 2:18-26

Someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.”  
Show me your faith apart from your works,  
and I by my works, will show you my faith.

You believe that God is one; you do well.  
Even the demons believe—and shudder.  
Do you want to be shown, you senseless person,  
that faith apart from works is barren?  
Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works  
when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?  
You see that faith was active along with his works,  
and faith was brought to completion by the works.  
Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says,  
“Abraham believed God,  
and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,”  
and he was called the friend of God.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.  
Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works  
when she welcomed the messengers  
and sent them out by another road?  
Just as the body without the spirit is dead,  
so faith without works is also dead.

\* We read again of Abraham and Rehab. (Hebrews 11) How are their stories used differently here in regard to faith? How are the uses complementary rather than contradictory? How is faith at the core?

\* Think of stories from your own life and that of your faith community that exemplify that, just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead. Talk with each other about, “Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works, will show you my faith.”

*Strengthen our faith, faithful God. Increase our works, acting God. In Christ. Amen.*

## **November 3**

### **James 3:1-5a**

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters,  
for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

\* Are you among those who need more teachers in your faith community?  
Why, then the words that not many should become teachers? What is the great  
responsibility of teachers of the faith? How are you in your congregation and  
we as a church body calling forth, equipping and supporting teachers?

All of us make many mistakes.  
Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect,  
able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.  
If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us,  
we guide their whole bodies.

Or look at ships:  
though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them,  
yet they are guided by a very small rudder  
wherever the will of the pilot directs.

So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

\* Picture a bridle on a horse and a rudder on a ship and their power to check  
and guide. What other images come to mind that make the same point?

\* What other parts of your body might you have chosen in considering what  
guides your actions? James points to the tongue. What power does it have?

*You alone are perfect. You alone are wise, O God. Teach us. Guide us. May  
we who have been made part of Christ's body, receive thankfully our call to  
share the Good News, accept conscientiously our responsibilities as teachers  
of the faith, and take seriously the power of our words. In Christ, Amen.*

## **November 4**

### **James 3:5b-12**

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!  
The tongue is a fire.  
The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity;  
it stains the whole body,  
sets on fire the cycle of nature,  
and is itself set on fire by hell.

Every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature,  
can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species,  
but no one can tame the tongue—  
a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless the Lord and with it we curse  
those who are made in the likeness of God.  
From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.  
My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.

Does a spring pour forth from the same opening  
both fresh and brackish water?  
Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs?  
No more can salt water yield fresh.

\* When have you experienced the tongue as a restless evil, full of deadly  
poison? Have you experienced (given or received) a tongue lashing? Bullying?  
Bearing false witness? What else? How has that stained the whole body?

\* How can we with the same mouth both bless and curse? What is the deep  
fear or hatred or self-deception or self-aggrandizement? Why is it hard to tame  
the tongue? What are some things faith communities can do to change?

*You spoke and the world was created. Your Word became flesh in Jesus the  
Christ. Your Spirit inspires us to pray, praise, and speak words that uplift and  
comfort. May we who are members of the body of Christ, not stain this body  
with evil and idle talk. May our words be a blessing. In Christ, Amen.*

## **November 5**

### **James 3:13-18**

\* Who is wise and understanding among you?

Show by your good life that your works are done  
with gentleness and wisdom.

But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts,  
do not be boastful and false to the truth.

Such wisdom does not come down from above,  
but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.

Where there is envy and selfish ambition.

there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.

\* What is the connection of envy and selfish ambition with disorder and wickedness? How have you seen this manifest in the Christian community?

But the wisdom from above is pure, then peaceable, gentle,  
willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits,  
without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

\* When have you seen people full of mercy, willing to yield, free from partiality and hypocrisy? By the power of God's love, how do we help a Christian community grow into being a caring place where understanding flourishes?

*A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.*

*Peaceable, gentle God, give us the Spirit of wisdom that our hearts may be merciful and our lives yield good fruits. May we as a caring community, by sowing peace, produce a harvest of righteousness and give witness to your love in the world. In Christ, Amen.*

## **November 6**

### **James 4:1-6**

\* Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from?  
Do they not come from cravings that are at war within you?

You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder.

You covet something and cannot obtain it;  
so you engage in disputes and conflict.

You do not have because you do not ask.

You ask and do not receive, because your motives are wrong;  
you ask for things to use for your own pleasures.

Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world  
is enmity with God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world  
becomes an enemy of God.

\* Do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, "God yearns jealously for the spirit that God has made to dwell in us?" What does that mean to you?

\* Just what kind of adultery is this? When God calls us to fear, love and trust in no other gods, why is it bad for us that we adulterate that relationship?

\* How has "being a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" been misinterpreted to keep Christians away from our call to be deeply engaged in the world for the sake of justice ministry? How does being in a right relationship with God turn us around, away from conflicts that consume, towards service that liberates?

*God, you give all the more grace. You oppose the proud and give grace to the humble. Keep us in your grace for Christ's sake, Amen.*

## November 7

### James 4:7-12

Submit yourselves therefore to God.  
Resist the devil, and the devil will flee from you.  
Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you.  
Cleanse your hands, you sinners,  
and purify your hearts, you double-minded.  
Lament and mourn and weep.  
Let your laughter be turned into mourning  
and your joy into dejection.

\* What gloomy words are these! But, at a deep level, where we *are* embroiled in sin and impurity and in a double-minded, messy life, to what do these words call us? How are dejection and mourning a part of confession and conversion?

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and God will exalt you.

Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters.  
Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another,  
speaks evil against the law and judges the law;  
but if you judge the law,  
you are not a doer of the law but a judge.  
There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy.

\* So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?

*Righteous God, who gave the Law for our righteousness and right relationships with you and with our neighbor, we confess that we have spoken evil against one another; we have used your law to play God by thinking we are the almighty judge. Save us from destruction. In the cross of Christ, may we lament and mourn and weep, and in his resurrection alone may we be exalted that we may become humble doers of your word. Amen.*

## November 8

### James 4:13-17

Come now, you who say,  
“Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town  
and spend a year there doing business and making money.”  
You do not even know what tomorrow will bring.

\* What is your life?

\* What is the role of making plans in your life? Do you carefully make long-range plans? Do you build in contingency plans? Do you avoid planning altogether, preferring to take each day as it comes? How do we, who do not know what tomorrow will bring, use our God-given wisdom responsibly and yet keep from thinking we have complete control over our lives?

You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.  
Instead you ought to say,  
“If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that.”

\* Is it your custom to add, “Lord willing,” either silently or out loud when speaking about seeing someone again, or telling someone you are going to do this or that? How might you add “If the Lord wishes” to your own prayers, daily plans and desires?

As it is, you boast in your arrogance;  
all such boasting is evil.  
Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do  
and fails to do it, commits sin.

\* How is boasting in our works the problem rather than *doing* good works? How is boasting evil and in what ways are you and I arrogant?

*May we, timeless and all-knowing God, not only seek your wisdom so that we know the right thing to do, but also do it. In Christ's love. Amen.*

## November 9

### James 5:1-6

Come now, you rich people,  
weep and wail for miseries that are coming to you.  
Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten.  
Your gold and silver have rusted,  
and their rust will be evidence against you,  
and it will eat your flesh like fire.  
You have laid up treasure for the last days.

Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields,  
which you kept back by fraud, cry out,  
and the cries of the harvesters  
have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

\* Martin Luther wrote in his explanation to the seventh commandment in his *Large Catechism*: “Beware how you deal with the poor of whom there are many now. If, when you meet the poor who must live from hand to mouth, you arrogantly turn them away whom you ought to give aid, they will go away wretched and dejected, and because they have no one else, they will cry to heaven. Such people’s cries will be no joking matter.”

\* Who is being exploited today? To what are you being called?

You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure;  
you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.  
You have condemned and murdered the righteous one,  
who does not resist you.

\* In the midst of rotting riches, how do we condemn and murder again the righteous one? How do you hear, “who does not resist you?” To what are you being called? What bold, courageous action is needed? Now!

*Source of life, may we receive your gifts with thanksgiving and live with generosity. You have given us Christ Jesus. May we in him alone place our hearts and our trust. Amen.*

## November 10

### James 5:7-12

Be patient, beloved, until the coming of the Lord.  
The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth,  
being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.  
You also must be patient.

Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.  
Beloved, do not grumble against one another,  
so that you may not be judged.  
See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

As an example of suffering and patience, beloved,  
take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.  
Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance.  
You have heard of the endurance of Job,  
and you have seen the purpose of the Lord,  
how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Above all, my beloved, do not swear,  
either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath,  
but let your “Yes” be yes and your “No” be no,  
so that you may not fall under condemnation.

\* How often James says, “My beloved.” Are these words of judgment, or warning, or encouragement? What do you say to your beloved?

\* How is patience the same as or different from endurance? How do we wait for the final coming of the Lord? How do we live in the meantime?

\* Why, really, do people swear? How do we speak so that our “Yes” is yes and our “No” is no in firm faith and patient leadership?

*We wait for your coming, Jesus. May we be patient in suffering and steadfast in endurance. May we reach out with Good News to all whom you call beloved. Amen.*

## November 11

### James 5:13-20

- \* Are any among you suffering? They should pray.  
Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.  
Are any among you sick?

They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them,  
anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

The prayer of faith will save the sick,  
and the Lord will raise them up;  
and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

Therefore confess your sins to one another,  
and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Elijah was a human being like us,  
and prayed fervently that it might not rain,  
and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain  
and the earth yielded its harvest.

My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth  
and is brought back by another,  
you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering  
will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

- \* Who among you is wandering from the truth of the Gospel? How do we pray  
for such a one? How do we reach out? And how might we confess our sins to  
one another? How might we as brothers and sisters in Christ pray constantly  
for one another's faith?

*We give thanks, faithful God, for brothers and sisters in Christ. Keep us  
fervent in prayer and in works of mission and ministry, especially for and  
among those who suffer. Amen.*

## November 12

### 1 Peter 1:1-9

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the exiles of the Dispersion  
in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia  
who have been chosen and destined by God the Father  
and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ  
and to be sprinkled with his blood.  
May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
By God's great mercy we have been given a new birth into a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,  
and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,  
kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God  
through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice,  
even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials,  
so that the genuineness of your faith,  
more precious than gold, though perishable and tested by fire,  
may be found to result in praise and glory and honor  
when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Although you have not seen him, you love him;  
and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him  
and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,  
for you are receiving the outcome of your faith,  
the salvation of your souls.

- \* Can you imagine the joy and encouragement when one is "dispersed," in  
exile, part of a struggling young congregation, or in suffering of any kind to  
hear these words? How would you—do you—express the core of your faith  
and the joy in Christ Jesus? How do you support struggling communities?

*Blessed God, may peace and joy be ours in abundance through Jesus Christ.  
And give us the strength and wisdom to support one another. Amen.*

## November 13

### 1 Peter 1:10-16

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours, made careful search and inquiry. They tried to find out when the time would be and how it would come, the time to which Christ's spirit within them was pointing, testifying in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the glory that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven— things into which angels long to look!

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves. Set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed.

Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desire that you formerly had in ignorance.

Instead, as the one who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written,

“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

\* What is *our* prophetic witness and how does it serve not only people today but also those who will live in future generations? What is our witness?

\* Why are we who are called to be disciples of Christ called to a life of discipline? What does a holy life look like? What does it look like to others?

*Timeless God, the prophets could not know when Jesus was to come. Neither can we know when he will come again. But we, like they, live in your revealed grace by the power of your spirit. Keep our minds on Christ, ready for actions of holy justice. Amen.*

## November 14

### 1 Peter 1:17-21

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile.

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.

He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

\* What does it mean to live in reverent fear?

\* How is it that we are ransomed from futile ways? What futile ways?

\* What does it mean to trust—really trust—God? How has being baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ enabled us to set our faith and hope on God?

*God of mercy, we confess that we often do seek ransom and rescue through perishable things such as silver and gold. We give you thanks for the precious blood of Jesus the Christ who was destined before the foundation of the world to be the savior of all. Amen.*

## November 15

### 1 Peter 1:22-25

Now that you have purified your souls  
by your obedience to the truth  
so that you have genuine mutual love,  
love one another deeply from the heart.

\* Why do many people stereotype Christians as thinking of themselves as morally superior? How is that image very different from obedience to the truth being about deep, genuine mutual love from the heart?

You have been born anew,  
not of perishable but imperishable seed,  
through the living and enduring word of God.  
For “All flesh is like grass  
and all its glory like the flower of grass.  
The grass withers, and the flower falls,  
but the word of the Lord endures forever.” (Isa. 40:6-8)

That word is the good news that was announced to you.

\* Consider the image of being born anew of imperishable seed. How does being nurtured by the word of God grow a Christian? How has it grown you?

\* Consider the image of wilting grass and withering flowers. No growing thing lasts forever. What does it mean to you that the word of the Lord, and those who believe in the word, endure forever?

*Eternal and Everlasting God, may the seed of your word take root in our hearts that in all ways we may grow in Christ. We thank you that by the power of your Spirit we have been born anew. May we share this good news of Jesus Christ and love one another with a deep, genuine, enduring love. Amen.*

## November 16

### 1 Peter 2:1-8

Rid yourselves of all malice, all guile, insincerity, envy, and slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to Christ, a living stone, rejected by mortals, yet chosen and precious in God’s sight. Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone, chosen and precious;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (Isa. 28:16)

To you who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” (Ps. 118:22)

And

“A stone that makes them stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall” (Isa. 8:14-15)

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

\* How are the faithful in your congregation growing while they serve in daily life, being *living* stones, a holy priesthood?

\* Picture Christ as the chosen cornerstone, upon which God continues to build the church. How is God laying stone upon stone in your church? How is Christ also a stumbling block? How do we also stumble over “as they were destined to do”?

*Nurture us on the pure milk of your word, that we may grow in your grace; we have tasted and seen that you, Lord, are good. Build us into a spiritual house in Christ. Amen.*



## **November 17**

### **1 Peter 2:9-12**

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, God's own people,  
in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of God  
who called you out of darkness into God's own marvelous light.

Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God's people,  
Once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

\* So what does it mean to be a chosen people? How is being chosen by God as a global church to proclaim the mighty acts of God different from thinking of one's country as a chosen nation with special privilege in the world?

\* What would it be like to not be a people of God and to be a people without mercy? In contrast, what is it like to be the recipients of God's mercy as a people? Read the book of Hosea.

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles  
to abstain from the desires of the flesh  
that wage war against the soul.

Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles,  
so that, although they malign you as evildoers,  
they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God  
when God comes to judge.

\* From what are we alienated and exiled? What wages war in our souls? What courage does it take to conduct oneself honorably when being maligned?

*May we be your witness, God of mercy. May we be your people for the sake of the world. Lighten our darkness. In Christ, we pray. Amen.*

## **November 18**

### **1 Peter 2:13-20**

For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution,  
whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors,  
as sent by him to punish those who do wrong  
and to praise those who do right.

For it is God's will that by doing right  
you should silence the ignorance of the foolish.

As servants of God, live as free people,  
yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil.  
Honor everyone. Love the family of believers.  
Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference,  
not only those who are kind and gentle, but also those who are harsh.  
It is a credit to you if, being aware of God,  
you endure pain while suffering unjustly.  
If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that?  
But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it,  
you have God's approval.

\* In the context of being free from sin and servants of God alone, how are we called to live in relationship with others, including governments?

\* How do we differentiate between enduring suffering, even unjust suffering, and working for justice, particularly on behalf of others who are oppressed? When does living as a servant of God call us to civil disobedience?

\* Why do we sometimes use our freedom as a pretext for evil? How do we fall back into enslaving people? How does Christ's suffering free us for the courageous work of freeing all those who are enslaved and for the long, hard work of changing oppressive systems?

*Because Christ suffered for us, may we fear, love and trust in you alone, O God, and live with love and honor and courage. In his name we pray. Amen.*

## November 19

### 1 Peter 2:21-25

For to this you have been called  
because Christ also suffered for you,  
leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.  
“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” (Isa. 53:9)  
When he was abused, he did not return abuse;  
when he suffered, he did not threaten;  
but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

\* How do you view Christ’s acceptance of abuse and suffering without self-protection or retaliation? How has this “example” been used *at* people to tell them to stay in abusive relationships and simply endure unjust suffering?

\* What is our calling? How do we follow in Christ’s steps? How do we entrust ourselves solely to the one who judges justly? To what is this calling you now?

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross,  
so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness;  
by his wounds you have been healed.  
You were going astray like sheep,  
but now you have returned to the shepherd  
and guardian of your souls.

\* We will not be free from sinning, nor from wandering away from God. But, Christ has born our sins in his body on the cross. What healing has this brought to your life? What does being free from sins mean to you? How will you use this freedom?

*Christ Jesus, free us from deceit, including self-deception, that we might live righteously. You have led us. Lead us still, for by your wounds we have been healed. Amen.*

## November 20

### 1 Peter 3:1-7

Wives, in the same way [as slaves are to accept their masters],  
accept the authority of your husbands,  
so that, even if some of them do not obey the word,  
they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct,  
when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.  
Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair,  
and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing;  
rather let your adornment be the inner self  
with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit,  
which is precious in God’s sight.

In this way long ago the holy women who hoped in God  
used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands.  
Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord.  
You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good  
and never let fears alarm you.  
Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives  
in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex,  
since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life—  
so that nothing may hinder your prayers.

\* What problems and what promise do you find in this text for contemporary use? On one hand, what negation, suppression, oppression, and abuse of women has been justified by quoting this text? On the other hand, what insights about inner lasting beauty and witness might apply to all Christians? Which emphasis has historically dominated?

\* What does “in the same way” mean? How might the address to husbands and to wives reference the preceding section about Christ’s own suffering?

\* The five words, “woman as the weaker sex” have been disproportionately quoted. How do you teach this text for human relationships today?

*May nothing hinder our prayers, gracious God. Join our lives to Christ Amen.*

## November 21

### 1 Peter 3:8-12

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, love for one another,  
a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse;  
but on the contrary, repay with a blessing.

It is for this that you were called—  
that you might inherit a blessing.

For “Those who desire life and desire to see good days,  
let them keep their tongues from evil  
and their lips from speaking deceit;  
let them turn away from evil and do good;  
let them seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and God’s ears are open to their prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (Ps. 34:12-16)

\* After all of the instructions, some very specific to New Testament times, how is this “Finally” comprehensive for all times and all relationships? When have you experienced unity of spirit, love for one another, tenderheartedness and humility in the Christian community? How, by God’s grace, do you help foster it?

\* How have you been tempted to repay evil for evil, abuse for abuse? What is your calling to be a blessing as well as to receive one?

*O God, you open your eyes and ears to us. We know you hear our prayer. We know you see our needs and our deeds. May we speak your truth as we witness to Christ. Amen.*

## November 22

### 1 Peter 3:13-17

\* Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good?

Even if you do suffer for doing what is right,  
you are blessed.

Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated,  
but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord.

\* We *are* sometimes harmed, and do suffer for doing what is just and right. How can we keep from being intimidated?

Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you  
an accounting for the hope that is in you;  
yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

\* Why do people “demand” a “defense?” What is it that they fear? How can understanding that help us give a strong answer—witness—with respect for them, and with gentle strength? What are some of the many ways you can speak of the hope you have in Christ?

Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned,  
those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ  
may be put to shame.

It is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will,  
than to suffer for doing evil.

\* What is the distinction here? Surely not between suffering and not suffering. How, in seeking God’s will for our lives of discipleship, do we deal with suffering? Throughout chapters 2 and 3 the center is Christ’s suffering.

*O God, you know the hearts of all people. Give us courage, humility and wisdom that we may be ready to speak boldly about the hope that lies within us, working your will in the world. In the name of our suffering Savior, Amen.*

## November 23

### 1 Peter 3:18-22

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all,  
the righteous for the unrighteous,  
in order to bring you to God.

Christ was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,  
in which also he went and preached to the imprisoned spirits.  
These were the spirits of those who had not obeyed  
when God waited patiently during the days of Noah,  
during the building of the ark.

The few people in the boat—eight in all—were saved through water,  
which was a symbol pointing to baptism, which now saves you.

It is not the washing off of bodily dirt,  
but an appeal made to God for a good conscience.  
It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,  
who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God,  
ruling over all angels and heavenly authorities and powers.

\* How are all the instructions for how we live in relationship with each other  
(the first part of chapter 3) not helpful without Christ's death and resurrection?

\* Why is Christ being put to death as the Righteous One important for us to  
make meaning out of his suffering? How does that bring you to God each day?

\* Ponder the waters of the flood and God's saving action. Ponder your own  
baptism and God's saving action. Ponder God's ultimate universal power.

*God, ruler of the heavens and the earth, we stand in awe. We wonder as you  
waited patiently. We rest in the promise of our baptism into Christ's death and  
resurrection. And we give you thanks for Christ Jesus, our Savior. Amen.*

## November 24

### 1 Peter 4:1-6

Since Christ suffered in the flesh,  
strengthen yourselves also with the same intention  
(for whoever suffers in the flesh physically has finished with sin).  
So the rest of your earthly life you live no longer by human desires  
but by the will of God.

\* What does a life transformed through Christ's suffering look like? What  
does it mean to you to live by the will of God?

You have already spent enough time doing what the Gentiles like to do,  
living in licentiousness, lust, drunkenness,  
revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry.  
They are surprised that you no longer join them in the same excesses  
of reckless living, and so they insult you and God.

\* When have you experienced, in subtle or blatant ways, people making fun of  
or insulting you and God because you do not live as they do?

But they will have to give an accounting to God  
who stands ready to judge the living and the dead.  
This is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead,  
to those who had been judged in their physical life,  
so that, even though they had been judged in the flesh  
they might live in the spirit as God does.

\* What do you make of the idea that the gospel is preached even to the dead?

*Holy God, you judge the living and the dead. May we be freed from addictions  
to lives of excess and idolatry. Strengthen us to seek your will for lives of  
service. In Christ, we pray. Amen.*

## November 25

### 1 Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is near;  
therefore be serious and discipline yourselves  
for the sake of your prayers.  
Above all, maintain constant love for one another,  
for love covers a multitude of sins.

Be hospitable to one another without complaining.  
Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God,  
serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.  
Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God.  
Whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies,  
so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.

To God belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

\* Although the end time did not turn out to be as near as the first-century Christians thought, that expectation shaped their world view and daily life. How does it shape yours?

\* Although earlier in the chapter we read that we were “finished with sin,” here it is implied that we continue to struggle. How does love cover a multitude of sins without that becoming an excuse? What is the power of love?

\* Take some time to contemplate privilege of our being stewards of the grace of God, to serve one another with whatever gifts we have, to speak as speaking the very words of God, and to serve with the strength God supplies.

*We give you thanks, gracious God, for your word, your strength, your gifts. May we love one another with constancy and consistency, showing hospitality as though we were welcoming Christ. In the power of your love may we serve one another always. Amen.*

## November 26

### 1 Peter 4:12-19

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal  
that is taking place among you to test you,  
as though something strange were happening to you.  
But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings,  
so that you may also be glad and shout for joy  
when Christ’s glory is revealed.

If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed,  
because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God,  
is resting upon you.

\* When have you been surprised at the fiery ordeals that break out around you and among you? How in the world can we rejoice? How is Christ being revealed in the midst of it?

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief,  
a criminal, or even a mischief maker.  
Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace,  
but glorify God because you bear Christ’s name.  
The time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God;

\* If it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

\* And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?” (Prov. 11:31)

Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God’s will  
entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

*Protector God, in the midst of fiery ordeals, we entrust ourselves to your care alone, so that in the midst of suffering we may see the face of Christ. We cannot comprehend your righteous judgment and your merciful love. We commit all people to your care. We pray in the name of Christ. Amen.*

## **November 27**

### **1 Peter 5:1-7**

As an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,  
as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed,  
I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God,  
exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly,  
as God would have you do it—  
not for sordid gain but eagerly.  
Do not lord it over those in your charge,  
but be examples to the flock.  
And when the chief shepherd appears,  
you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.

\* How do these words shape your concept of leadership? What are some problems in our own motivation and attitude? In authoritarianism? (Only Christ is Lord.) What positive images of tending the flock describe you?

In the same way, you who are younger  
must accept the authority of the elders.  
And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility  
in your dealings with one another, for  
“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (Prov. 3:34)

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,  
so that God may exalt you in due time.  
Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you.

\* What strengths do you see in humility? How do we clothe ourselves with humility in genuine, consistent caring?

\* Leadership, including collaborative leadership, can produce anxiety. As difficult as it may be at times, how do you know that God cares for you as a leader? To whom do you go to be assured of God’s consistent care?

*We cast our cares on you, Good Shepherd. May we tend your flock. Amen.*

## **November 28**

### **1 Peter 5:8-14**

Discipline yourselves, keep alert.  
Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around,  
looking for someone to devour.  
Resist him, steadfast in your faith,  
for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world  
are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

\* If the devil is “prowling around,” looking for someone to devour, how do we resist? Knowing that Christians have suffered for their faith over the centuries, what kind of suffering do we face today? How is our suffering connected in Christ to all suffering?

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace,  
who has called you to eternal glory in Christ,  
will restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.  
To God be the power forever and ever. Amen.

Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother,  
I have written this short letter to encourage you  
and to testify that this is the true grace of God.  
Stand fast in it.  
Our sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you,  
sends you greetings; and as does my son Mark.  
Greet one another with a kiss of love.  
Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

\* We have two blessings in these verses. God’s power remains and Christ’s peace is constant. How have you experienced God restoring, supporting, strengthening and establishing Christians and congregations? How do we encourage one another, constant in love, and support each other in Christ?

*May the God of all grace, who has called us in Christ, give us peace. Amen.*

## **November 29**

### **2 Peter 1:1-11**

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,  
to those who have received a faith as precious as ours  
through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:  
May grace and peace be yours in abundance  
in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Christ's divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness,  
through the knowledge of the one  
who called us by God's glory and goodness.

Thus God has given us his precious and very great promises,  
so that through them you may escape from the corruption  
that is in the world because of lust,  
and may become participants in the divine nature.

For this very reason, you must make every effort  
to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge,  
and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance,  
and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection,  
and affection with love.

\* For if these things are yours, they keep you from becoming ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. How?

Anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind,  
and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.

\* Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. How is our call affirmed? What if we do stumble? What does it mean in your life to have been and to be cleansed?

*We give you thanks, gracious God, that entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for us. In his name, we pray. Amen.*

## **November 30**

### **2 Peter 1:12-15**

I intend to keep on reminding you of these things,  
though you know them already  
and are established in the truth that has come to you.

I think it right, as long as I am in this body,  
to refresh your memory,  
since I know that my death will come soon,  
as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

I will make every effort so that after my departure  
you may be able at any time to recall these things.

\* "Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us and is risen from the dead. He is our living lord; he is joy for all ages." Why do we remind people of things they already know? What does it mean to be already established in a truth? In what ways do we manage to forget? Why do we need to be called back again and again to the heart of our faith, that God has loved us unconditionally in Jesus Christ?

\* First-century Christians believed Christ would come again soon. What is your calling while you wait for his coming? Perhaps even more pertinent for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians is the question, "What is our calling while we wait for our own deaths?" whether they be imminent, or years away.

\* How do we educate new, young Christians in the faith? How is lifelong leaning an ongoing refreshing of our memory? What are the forces and ideas that would pull us away from the truth of our faith?

*God of grace, you have given us precious promises and we have seen faith growing among us in your congregations. Increase our passion for ongoing education that we may hold fast to the truth of your Gospel. In Christ we pray. Amen.*