

DAILY SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Repeat this practice every day this week. The preparing, responding, and integrating elements remain the same every day. This repetition enables you to dwell in the practice more deeply through the week and it often opens you to new insights and experiences of God. The listening part of your practice changes so that each day can focus on a different aspect of the reflection on Scripture. Feel free to use the questions provided to guide you or to follow your own process as you meditate with the reading and the thoughts presented here. **PREPARING** Spend a few moments in silence. Get comfortable and ground yourself in your body. Slow and deepen your breathing and focus on your breath entering and leaving your body. If any thoughts come up, notice them and then let them go. If you need to make a note of anything so that you can return to it later, then do that. When you're ready, light your fourth Advent candle, the Candle of Love, and spend a few moments meditating on the flame. Next, shift your awareness to the theme of today's meditation. The following questions may help you in your reflections

: • How good are you with developing and following effective processes to accomplish your goals?

• We often speak about God working in our lives and world, but we don't spend too much time talking about how God works. What do you think about when you think about the Divine Process?

• How do you think God's Process and the processes of the world differ?

In what ways are they similar? When you feel ready, you may want to offer this, or some other prayer

: We talk and pray about how you work in our world, God; we read the Scriptures and see how the writers experienced you at work, but we don't often take note of how you work. We usually assume that your processes are like ours, but if we look more carefully, we discover that the Divine Process is radically different from ours: far less concerned about efficiency and speed, and far more focussed on grace, love, transformation, and justice. So, teach me God, about your process and help me to cooperate with it in whatever way I can. Amen. **LISTENING** Insert the **LISTENING EXERCISES** for the relevant day at this point in your spiritual practice.

RESPONDING When you feel ready, spend a few moments responding to your reflections of today. Consider any areas of your life where you struggle to recognise God's Process at work, to align yourself with God's Process, or to understand what God's Process is. Now take a few moments to notice what stood out for you in today's practice. Journal any thoughts that are especially helpful or challenging and consider how you will work with these thoughts through the day. Finally, give yourself some time to sit quietly and enjoy the Divine Presence within you and around you.

INTEGRATING As you end your spiritual practice think of one thing you can do today to be more aware of God's Process in your life and to cooperate and align yourself with God's Process. One helpful practice can be to start your day by looking back over the previous day and noticing where

you see signs of God's activity. You will probably realise that most of what God does is quiet, natural, and hidden. And so, it will take time to learn to recognise God's Process and learn to align yourself with it. But when you begin to notice the signs of God's work, you can then set the intention each day to take note of God's activity and to cooperate in any way you can with what God is doing. As a preacher once said, "Rather than asking God to bless what you're doing, try to participate in what God is blessing." At the end of the day, you may want to journal the impact that your intention had on your life through the day. Close this time of personal spiritual practice with a short moment of silence or a prayer of thanksgiving and preparation for the rest of your day.

Monday

Return to the reflection at the start of this week, or to your notes from Sunday's sermon. Take note of anything new that may have stood out for you today. If you want to, you can spend your whole time working through what spoke to you. Or you can use the following questions to guide your prayer and meditation

: Who are the people who most influence your life and spirituality at the moment?

What makes you trust these people?

What value have you received from their teaching or guidance?

Now turn to

Matthew 7:15-20.

Read through the passage once and then spend a minute or two in silence as you reflect on how it connects with this week's theme. Then read the passage through a second time, noticing anything new that may stand out in your reading. As you read Jesus' words about good and bad fruit, what thoughts arise in your mind?

How do you respond emotionally?

What happens in your body?

Take time to meditate on this passage and your response to it. And then reflect on the people and teachers in your life that you believe bear good fruit and those that bear bad fruit. Consider also where in your own life there is good and bad fruit.

What does good fruit look like for you?

And what does bad fruit look like?

And what can this teach you about how God works in your world?

End this listening part of your practice today by journaling any thoughts or experiences that you want to treasure, keep in mind, or return to later.

Tuesday

Return to the reflection at the start of this week, or to your notes from Sunday's sermon. Take note of anything new that may have stood out for you today. If you want to, you can spend your whole time working through what spoke to you. Or you can use the following question to guide your prayer and meditation

: Why do you think Jesus was born in such humble and hidden circumstances, rather than in ways that the people of the time could easily see and recognise?

Now turn to

Mark 4:30-32.

Read through the passage once and then spend a minute or two in silence as you reflect on how it connects with this week's theme. Then read the passage through a second time, noticing anything new that may stand out in your reading.

As you read the parable of the mustard seed, what thoughts arise in your mind?

How do you respond emotionally?

What happens in your body?

Take time to meditate on this parable and your response to it. And then consider why Jesus chose a small seed, that gets hidden in the ground, to illustrate God's reign. What other parables of small or hidden things did Jesus use to illustrate God's reign?

What do these parables teach you about God's Divine Process?

End this listening part of your practice today by journaling any thoughts or experiences that you want to treasure, keep in mind, or return to later.

Wednesday

Return to the reflection at the start of this week, or to your notes from Sunday's sermon. Take note of anything new that may have stood out for you today. If you want to, you can spend your whole time working through what spoke to you. Or you can use the following question to guide your prayer and meditation: In what ways might you be tempted to think that God's work follows the same processes and values as you see in human society?

Now turn again to

Isaiah 55:8-9.

Read through the passage once and then spend a minute or two in silence as you reflect on how it connects with this week's theme. Then read the passage through a second time, noticing anything new that may stand out in your reading.

As you read Isaiah's prophecy about how different God's thoughts and ways are from ours, what thoughts arise in your mind?

How do you respond emotionally?

What happens in your body?

When have you experienced God's work being very different from human processes?

How did God's different Process impact your life?

What have you learned about the Divine Process from these experiences?

End this listening part of your practice today by journaling any thoughts or experiences that you want to treasure, keep in mind, or return to later.

Thursday

Return to the reflection at the start of this week, or to your notes from Sunday's sermon. Take note of anything new that may have stood out for you today. If you want to, you can spend your whole time working through what spoke to you. Or you can use the following questions to guide your prayer and meditation

: To what extent do you see health, wealth and happiness as signs of God's blessing or reward?

And to what extent do you see illness, poverty and unhappiness as God's punishment or curse?

Now turn to

Matthew 5:41-48.

Read through the passage once and then spend a minute or two in silence as you reflect on how it connects with this week's theme. Then read the passage through a second time, noticing anything new that may stand out in your reading.

As you read about loving your enemies and blessing those who curse you, what thoughts arise in your mind?

How do you respond emotionally?

What happens in your body?

Take time to meditate on these thoughts and your response to them. And then consider what it would mean for you to love your enemies and bless those who curse you?

What would that look like practically in your life?

And what do these words from Jesus teach you about God's Process?

End this listening part of your practice today by journaling any thoughts or experiences that you want to treasure, keep in mind, or return to later.

Friday

Return to the reflection at the start of this week, or to your notes from Sunday's sermon. Take note of anything new that may have stood out for you today. If you want to, you can spend your whole time working through what spoke to you. Or you can use the following questions to guide your prayer and meditation

: When have you been surprised by sacredness?

When have you encountered signs of the Divine Presence and Process in an unexpected place or person?

Now turn to

Genesis 28:10-16. Read through the passage once and then spend a minute or two in silence as you reflect on how it connects with this week's theme.

read the passage through a second time, noticing anything new that may stand out in your reading. As you read about Jacob's dream, what thoughts arise in your mind?

How do you respond emotionally?

What happens in your body?

Take time to meditate on this passage and your response to it. Notice how Jacob awoke from his dream and exclaimed, "Surely God is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!" When have you been surprised by God's Presence or activity?

Have you ever been with someone or been in some place and only realised much later that you were in the presence of sacredness?

What did you feel after realising what you'd missed?

How can you be more aware of the presence of sacredness and of God in your world?

End this listening part of your practice today by journaling any thoughts or experiences that you want to treasure, keep in mind, or return to later.