

## My Prayer Journal

*Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.*

### Prayer of Confession:

*Holy God, we pray for a fresh anointing of Your Holy Spirit so that we too can proclaim good news to the poor. Help us this day to continue to demonstrate the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, and show the world what it means to proclaim release to the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, and liberation for the oppressed. We long to move forward with this saving work of our Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.*

### My Prayers this Week:

### Family Time:

Have you ever seen someone treated unfairly? Maybe at school someone got in trouble when another kid is the one who started the problem. Or maybe you and a sibling get into an argument and you feel that you were punished worse than them. The good news is that Jesus loves all of us and we are all God's children. Spend some time this week talking through situations that occur where you feel things happened unfairly. In order for us to see God's love shine through we sometimes need to put ourselves in someone else's shoes.

## MONDAY 11.9.20

## Isaiah 61:1-3

We begin this week's study based on Luke 4:16-30 by reading the original passage from Isaiah that Jesus quoted in the synagogue in Nazareth. In Isaiah, the author writes in the first person, assuming the voice of the promised Messiah—who, according to Isaiah 11:1-3, would be someone upon whom "the Spirit of the LORD will rest." Isaiah thereby announces many of the primary tasks that God anoints the Messiah to undertake—all of which are gathered under the overall banner of "good news to the poor." While in our modern context, we might be tempted to restrict the definition of "the poor" to financial or material matters, the word in Isaiah actually speaks to anyone who is distressed or in trouble, for any reason. It is a word of hope for the brokenhearted, the captive, the prisoner, the oppressed, those who mourn, and those who grieve. God promises through Isaiah that some day, everyone experiencing pain and injustice in this world will be restored to a place of beauty, gladness, and joy. These everyday realities are not what God wants for us.

- Why would people suffering in any of these ways have found hope in the words of Isaiah?
- Why do you think Jesus says this promise is now fulfilled?

## TUESDAY 11.10.20

## Exodus 23:1-6

It cannot be overemphasized that from the very beginning, God expressed an expectation that His people would treat each other, and even people outside the faith community, with justice. The short set of laws of justice and mercy here in Exodus were part of the law that Moses received from God on Mount Sinai, and they provide a small window into these expectations. Don't lie about others' actions. Tell the truth even when the crowd tells lies. Don't favor a poor person just because they are poor. Return another person's property when you find it, even if they are your enemy. Make sure poor people, who are easily trampled upon, receive justice. Seek truth so that honest people aren't punished wrongly. Don't let an offer of money steer you away from honesty. And don't treat someone poorly just because they're a foreigner, because at some point in our ancestry, our family was almost certainly foreigners, too. While many of these statements sound like moral "guidelines," we need to see that from God's perspective, these were *laws* that Israel was expected to live by. In today's world, that would mean being arrested and sent to jail for failing to do them.

- Would you be able to be convicted of any of these crimes? Would our culture as a whole be convicted of any of them?

## WEDNESDAY 11.11.20

## Psalms 11

Psalms 11, attributed to King David, seems to emerge from a situation in which David was being advised to flee from his enemies and take refuge in the mountains. We see a couple of instances in the stories in 1 and 2 Samuel when David did, in fact, flee from his enemies. But in this situation, it would seem that David was determined to trust in God's providence rather than take his advisers' advice. The psalm insists that, as the God of righteousness, our God sees all, and will ultimately ensure that justice is done. Notice the line, "when the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The laws of Exodus, like those we read yesterday, were the foundation of Israelite society. When injustice, dishonesty, and favoritism become the norm, it can feel like the entire world is falling apart to the person who is striving to do right. David's advisers apparently felt this way, and thought the best thing he could do was just escape from it all, by going somewhere else. But David knows that even when things are going that poorly, the people of God can take comfort in the fact that they are on God's side, and God will make things right.

- Do you ever feel like "the foundations are being destroyed"?
- How does Psalm 11 speak to those feelings?

## THURSDAY 11.12.20

## Zechariah 7:8-14

The prophet Zechariah wrote very late in the Old Testament history of Israel, about 520 years before the birth of Jesus. The people had been permitted to return from exile in Babylon to the Promised Land of Israel, but what they found was a land in utter ruins. They often became discouraged in their rebuilding efforts, as we can read in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In today's passage, Zechariah reminds the people of how they arrived in this situation. Their ancestors had continually failed to live as God's people. They had the very laws we have been studying this week—administer justice, show mercy, have compassion, don't oppress widows, orphans, aliens, or the poor—and Zechariah places the blame for the current plight of Israel squarely on the backs of the Israelites' failure to be obedient to these laws. "This is how they made the pleasant land desolate." The lesson Zechariah is teaching is clear—any society that fails to do these things is setting itself up for future desolation. But if you read on into chapter 8, you will see that it is not too late for Israel—God is zealous to restore Israel to its glory.

- Why do you think there is a correlation between these kinds of failures and a society's downfall?
- Are we paying attention to God's laws today?

