

Weekly Scripture Readings September 17, 2023

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, instructed us to "stay in love with God" by worshipping, studying scripture, attending Communion, fasting and through public and private prayers. In order to help facilitate daily scripture reading and prayer, this insert contains readings for each day as well as a prayer for the week. The scriptures from Monday through Wednesday reference the readings for the prior Sunday, and Thursday through Saturday reference the scriptures for the following Sunday. We hope that these daily scripture readings and prayer will help you to deepen your relationship with God as we seek to live into our call to be disciples of Christ.

Romans 14:1-12 (NRSV)

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also, those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

John 15:1-8 (NRSV)

Jesus said, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

Psalm 103 (NRSV)

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.
The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.
For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.
As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field;
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.
But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,
to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.
The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.
Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding,
obedient to his spoken word.
Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.
Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.

Exodus 14:19-31 (NRSV)

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so, the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord

is fighting for them against Egypt.’ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.’ So, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So, the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Daily Scripture Readings

Monday, September 18

Psalm 77
Joshua 3:1-17
Hebrews 11:23-29

Wednesday, September 20

Psalm 77
2 Kings 2:1-18
Mark 11:20-25

Friday, September 22

Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
Leviticus 23:1-8
Romans 8:31-39

Tuesday, September 19

Psalm 77
Nehemiah 9:9-15
Romans 14:13—15:2

Thursday, September 21

Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
Exodus 31:12-18
Acts 25:1-12

Saturday, September 23

Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
Leviticus 24:5-9
John 7:19-24

Prayer for the week: On this day of rest and gladness, we praise you, God of creation, for the dignity of work and the joy of play, for the challenge of witness and the invitation to delight at your table. Renew our hearts through your Sabbath rest, that we might be refreshed to continue in your work of restoring the world to wholeness. Amen.

Next Sunday: The scripture readings for Sunday, September 24, are Leviticus 25:1-7; Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45; Philippians 1:21-30 and Mark 2:23-3:6. Next Sunday, "Let it Rest", will be on the passage from Mark. Next Sunday is a contemporary service.

Questions to help you prepare: There are two reasons given in scripture for why we are to practice sabbath. What are they? Who all is included in the list to practice sabbath? Why was that necessary? Why are they even to let the fields lie fallow every seven years? What does it mean that the sabbath was made for us, rather than us for the sabbath? What are your sabbath practices?

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