

“What They Did”
Surviving the Pandemic: Ancient Practices for a New Normal
Psalm 139:7-14
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September 13, 2020

Introduction: _____ is nothing new for people of faith.

1300 BC Exodus Event – The Israelites became _____. Human life was _____.
People rarely react with _____ when they are being delivered from bondage.

722 BC – Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah warned Israel, yet the Assyrians marched down the coastline and _____ leading citizens and skilled workers and took them to various regions of the Assyrian Empire.

586 BC – The Babylonians ravaged Jerusalem, destroyed the _____, and led the king and thousands more to captivity.

30 AD – Early Church Persecution – It was a _____ to follow Jesus.

How Do God’s People Respond?

Moses – Fear of the _____ and anxiety about their _____ caused the Israelites to complain again and again.

Assyrian Exile – Without a temple, without clergy, they would gather and _____.

Babylonian Exile – They would read scripture together and remember God’s _____.
God is with us no matter how far we _____ geographically or spiritually.

The People of Acts 2 – They devoted themselves to scripture and _____.
Jesus-followers choose to _____ rather than despair.
We love and serve because _____ first loved and served us.
They took _____ of one another.

Action Steps: Come to Church _____ – 6pm Saturday, September 26 with Fireworks!
Get _____ with a few other Jesus-followers and a few not-yet Christians.

1. What can we celebrate?
2. Where are you stuck?
3. What needs to change?
4. How did you experience God this week?

Celebrate God’s presence _____ you are.

Daily Reading and Reflection September 14-18

Monday – Hosea 2: *“Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.” Hosea 2:14-15*

Troubling times are nothing new for people of faith. We may read headlines and watch the news and wonder if there has ever been a more contentious or perilous time for people to exist. And yet, each generation can reflect on their own lives and recall the same kinds of tumult. Scripture is filled with examples of God’s people crying out amid troubling circumstances, and it is also filled with examples of God’s faithfulness in tending to and caring for his people. The words of the prophets remind us that when we despair, we always have hope.

PRAYER: Gracious God, you have been steadfast throughout generations. You hear and respond to our cries and our needs. Remind me of your presence this day. AMEN.

Tuesday – Matthew 2: *“Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.” Matthew 2:13-15*

On Sunday Pastor Mark reminded the Israelites’ tendency to get scared, anxious, and to complain. Often we respond similarly when we’re presented with something unknown. In those situations, we can try practicing acknowledgement. When we pause and acknowledge that we feel anxious or fearful, we trip up our natural inclination to complain, lament, or lash out. Instead, we turn those anxieties over to God and experience peace.

PRAYER: Heavenly Lord, help me to be mindful in each moment. Give me eyes to see your work around me, and when I encounter something that troubles me, give me the courage to turn it over to you. AMEN.

Wednesday – Acts 2: *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42*

This verse is ever present in the life of our church. You’ll see it carved into our building, framed within our walls, and experience it in our worship and fellowship. There is a good reason. When the people of God become overwhelmed by the things they experience in the world, they need to be reminded of the goodness of God’s grace, the light in the darkness. Scripture and history give us a model for how we spiritually re-charge and re-engage with the world. We come together to worship, break bread, pray, and immerse ourselves in God’s word.

PRAYER: Jesus, give me a hunger for your word. Give me welcoming arms of fellowship. Hear my prayers and the prayers of my brothers and sisters. You are the light in the darkness, and you are good. AMEN.

Thursday – 2 Samuel 6: *“David danced before the Lord with all his might ... So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.” 2 Samuel 6:14-15*

In this passage, David is relocating the Ark of the Covenant from the battlefield to its home in Jerusalem. The journey doesn’t exactly go smoothly, and as you’ll read in today’s chapter, the group becomes stuck. They can’t move forward with their plans, everything seems to go awry when they try to proceed, and they are forced to wait. Finally, they receive God’s blessing to continue on to the Holy City, and in response, David and the whole of Israel danced and rejoiced. One of the actions steps Pastor Mark gave us was to identify where we are stuck. He also encouraged us to celebrate when we become unstuck.

PRAYER: Holy God, you lay out paths in front of me. Through your Holy Spirit you give me guidance and direction. I pray that I will heed your instruction, and delight in the places we will go together. AMEN.

Friday – Psalm 37: *“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4*

Last Sunday in worship, Pastor Mark encouraged us to experience God everywhere. Elsewhere in the Psalms, we are told to celebrate God’s presence wherever we are. When we delight in the Lord, we’ll find that our hearts are filled, and the things we thought we wanted or thought would fulfill us simply don’t measure up.

PRAYER: Almighty God, how great is your love for me! You delight when I delight, and I delight in your presence. Help me to see you in everything that I do, and in every person I talk to. AMEN.