

## Gather Together



Jesus, following you is not easy for us. We are grateful for your promise to be with us always as we attempt to allow our lives to belong to you. We thank you for your gifts of food, family homes, and our lives and may we use these gifts to offer hope to your world. Amen.



What was a peaceful moment today? What was a hard moment today? Who reflected Jesus' love to you today?



† All of you belong to God †

## Daily Readings



Monday through Wednesday:

*Living in Exile*

2 Kings 17: 24-41, 2 Kings 18: 9-18, 2 Kings 18: 19-25, 19: 1-7

These 2 Kings passages tell the story of the conquering of the Israelites by Assyria and their exile. Faith journeys are rarely straight forward or without bumps in the road. Sometimes it takes being "in exile" and out of our comfort zone to hear God's voice. When was a time that you felt "in exile" or cut off from your comfort zone? How did you experience God's presence with you? What helped you to remember that you belonged to God?



Thursday through Saturday:

*God and Noah*

Genesis 6: 1-6, Genesis 7: 6-10, 8: 1-5, Genesis 8: 20-9:7

What we typically think of as a children's Sunday School story is perhaps richer than we realize at first glance. God was attempting to deal with humanity and our tendency to hurt one another. God is a God of second chances and wanted humanity and creation to try again. What does this gift of second (and third, fourth, fifth, etc.) chances mean to you in your faith and daily life?

## Faith Focus



Luke 14: 25-33 - Following Jesus



How has following Jesus changed your life? Has it? Why do you think it is difficult for us to "give up all our possessions"?



This passage from Luke is difficult! It is full of harsh and direct language from Jesus. Hate our families and life itself to follow Jesus? Give up everything we own? Do we even know what this means or what this might look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Jesus is asking the crowds (and us) to be clear about what their identity is and the whole point to Jesus' words here in Luke is that he knows it's impossible for us to get this "right" on our own. Is our identity linked to our family? Vocation? Material possessions? Or is our identity rooted in God? If it's God, then how will people around us know that we are followers of Jesus? Jesus is clear that following him is not easy-this is Jesus who tells us to love the unlovable, the outsiders, the "weird" people, the ones we disagree with, the ones we don't even like. It's not comfortable, but it is transformative. When you quit worrying about what others think, what someone might take from you, or looking foolish, then you begin to live into the good news that there is more than what the world offers-there is hope for authentic and abundant life where all people thrive in God's unending love. How will people around you at school, work, in your neighborhood know that you live in this hope, and you offer your whole life to be transformed by God's love? Keep a journal (or a family journal) this week of your journey through the real tension and struggle of following Jesus. Know that you are not alone in the struggle or on your faith journey! Jesus promises to be with us! Pray for one another this week and know that your faith community prays for you and is with you too!