

# Daily Devotions

## Monday October 30

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

### ***For Reflection***

“The days are surely coming.” These are words of profound hope. Jeremiah wrote to exiles in Babylon who did not see much of a future for themselves. But the Lord was not done writing their story, no matter how defeated and hopeless they felt. A new covenant, a new re-establishment of their relationship with God, would come.

And this new covenant would not be an external law, but a change of their inner being. God will “write [the law] on their hearts,” changing their wills so that they will desire to follow the ways of the Lord. No command can do this; we cannot be ordered to want something. The change has to come from within. When we celebrate Reformation Sunday, we remember Luther’s teaching that we cannot observe God’s law on our own because of sin, but in Christ, God forgives us and makes us new. This prophecy from Jeremiah is central to understanding how Christ renews us: his Spirit changes our hearts, giving us new desires and a new story for our lives. Forgiveness and freedom don’t mean “just do whatever you feel like.” They mean God will change us, sometimes slowly, so that we want the things he wants. This happens as, more and more, we come to see just how good and loving he is. His mercy moves our souls, and gives us a new heart. Thanks be to God!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Have you ever felt defeated or hopeless? How do the words, “the days are surely coming” encourage you?
2. Do you have a habit, or a mindset, or a pattern of thought or behavior that you know isn’t healthy or pleasing to God, but you can’t seem to change it? How does this passage encourage you to seek God’s help to write a new way of life in your heart?

### **Read Psalm 68**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for farmers, students learning about agriculture, and those who work in parks and natural resources. Pray for an abundant harvest and for all people to have healthy food and clean air and water. Pray that the Holy Spirit would encourage people throughout the world to live as good and faithful stewards of the world God made.

### **Tuesday October 31**

#### **Read Psalm 69-70**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for students, teachers, and schools staff beginning a new academic year. Pray for God’s wisdom and joy to fill all those who work with young people in schools, day care centers, and other youth activities. Ask God to bless Reformation’s Kids’ Inc. program and the work of our Growing Young Team, that we might touch the lives of the young people in our day care and our congregation with the love and hope of Jesus.

### **Wednesday November 1**

#### **Psalm 46**

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

<sup>3</sup>though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

<sup>4</sup>There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

<sup>6</sup>The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

<sup>8</sup>Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

<sup>9</sup>He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

<sup>10</sup>“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

### **For Reflection**

This psalm beautifully describes the power of God. If we imagine this psalm being sung, we can imagine the singer’s voice growing louder and more forceful with the lines, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (v. 1) and “Come, behold the works of the Lord” (v. 8). What do you think happens to the singer’s voice when he or she reaches verse 10, “Be still, and know that I am God!” Do you imagine that sung in a loud and commanding voice, or in a soft and quiet voice? Try reading this psalm aloud. Let your own voice rise and fall with the words that describe God’s power to create and to make wars cease on the one hand, and to simply be present with his beloved people, on the other. Our God is for us, and Psalm 46 helps us comprehend his great power and be thankful for his loving presence. What aspects of God does this psalm highlight for you as you read it today?

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Psalm 46 inspired Martin Luther’s Reformation hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” What phrases or images from the psalm do you recognize from singing the hymn on Reformation Sunday? If you have a hymnal at home, you can read or sing the words of the hymn at home. It’s number 504 in our current hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW).
2. How does this psalm describe God’s interaction with creation? How does God’s presence comfort us when nature or other aspects of life are unsettling or chaotic?

3. Look again at verse 10. The Lord declares, “Be still, and know that I am God!” How can you make some time for silence and stillness so you can listen for God’s voice and direction today?

### **Read Psalm 71-72**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for the ministry of Reformation Lutheran Church, that we would be devoted to serving God, bearing witness to the Gospel so that others may come to believe, and serving our community so that we may bless others.

## **Thursday November 2**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, <sup>2</sup>but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. <sup>3</sup>For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, <sup>4</sup>but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup>As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; <sup>6</sup>nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others,

<sup>7</sup>though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. <sup>8</sup>So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

### ***For Reflection***

Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians is widely regarded as one of his most affectionate letters. The strong, healthy relationships Paul experienced enabled him to preach and lead the Thessalonian Christians in a way that led to powerful mission and ministry. I’d like to focus on the last verse of this passage: “we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.” Christian community means we share our lives with each other. We invest in each other and in our common endeavor of mission.

Christianity is not a spectator sport. “Church” is not about showing up for a musical performance and a “message.” It is about praying and praising God together, hearing God’s Word together, and being drawn into deeper relationships with God and with each other. It’s about stepping into something bigger than ourselves and letting the Spirit of God lead us into a mission of blessing for the world. And this world needs the love of Christ. Will we give “our own selves” for his work?

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. How have you experienced someone from church sharing themselves with you? How has it blessed you? How can you share yourself with others?
2. What is a next step you can take to share yourself (your time, your talents, your ideas, your financial resources) with the mission of ChristDelawar more fully?

### **Read Psalm 73-74**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for the spiritual growth of yourself and all our members, that we would be filled with the Holy Spirit, increase in our knowledge of God’s will, and overflow in love for each other and the world around us.

## **Friday November 3**

### **John 8:31-36**

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” <sup>33</sup>They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free?’” <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup>The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

### ***For Reflection***

Have you ever received an invitation, but you turned it down right away, thinking it wasn’t for you? Maybe you were invited to a neighbor’s high school graduation party. You didn’t think you’d know many people, so you stayed home. But as the party got going, you could see a lot of other neighbors your age there. From your window,

you could see the guests enjoying the food and the cake. As the party in their yard kept going far into the evening, you wondered if maybe you had missed out on a fun celebration.

It's hard for us to imagine why the people listening to Jesus were so reluctant to accept his invitation in today's reading from John's gospel. Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (v. 31). Instead of saying a hearty "Yes! We accept!" to Jesus' gracious invitation, his listeners argue with him. They cling to their own autonomy. They are content to stay as they are. They don't seem to care about Jesus' power to forgive sins, set them free, and change their lives, forever. Jesus, the Son of God, wants to make them free, and us as well. Let's listen closely to Jesus' invitation today, and open our hearts and minds so we can receive the wonderful gift of the forgiveness of sins, and freedom from sin and death. Let's accept Jesus' gift of freedom and abundant life with joy.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. This passage opens by stating that Jesus was speaking to people "who had believed in him" but it seems, by their refusal to accept his offer of freedom, that their belief was partial or incomplete. Can you relate to their reluctance to believe in Jesus wholeheartedly and accept the full range of his teaching? Is there anything that's causing you to hold back from accepting Jesus' grace and love? Are you holding his gifts at arm's lengths? If so, spend a few moments reflecting on why that is. Pray and ask God to allow you to receive the full gift of his forgiveness and love.
2. How would you define freedom these days? Are there different kinds of freedom: political freedom, spiritual freedom, or physical freedom? Do you feel like you are free? Why or why not?
3. What does it mean to you that Jesus, the Son, sets you free or makes you free? Do you usually think of freedom as something you earn for yourself, or as a gift from Jesus, your crucified and risen Lord? What do his death and resurrection have to do with your freedom?

**Read Psalm 75-77**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for peace in the world, especially in Ukraine. Ask God to sustain those who suffer under persecution for the name of Christ. Pray that all people would have freedom and good government.

**Saturday November 4**

**Read Psalm 78**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for police, fire fighters, all emergency workers, health care workers, and those who serve in the military. Pray for farmers and those who transport food. Ask God to grant well-being to all in our community, and to stir up generosity to meet the needs of those who lack food, shelter, or other needs.

**The Mission of Reformation Lutheran Church is to:**

**Invite** our neighbors as Jesus invites us.

**Engage** in a community of graceful discipleship.

**Equip** our members to grow in faith and ministry.

**Embody** the love of Jesus in our world.