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YEARS A, B, & C

# Faithful

*Meditations*

*for  
Every Day in  
Ordinary Time*



*Weeks 11–22*

*Rev. Warren J. Savage  
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## Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

### YEAR A

*Exodus 19:2–6a*

*Psalms 100:1–2, 3, 5*

*Romans 5:6–11*

*Matthew 9:36–10:8*

**When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**

MATTHEW 9:36

**Reflection:** Pain, suffering, brokenness, loneliness, alienation, despair, confusion, and humiliation are experiences of the human condition that move us to compassion. We don't have to look these words up to understand their meaning and impact. We see pain in the faces of people living with debilitating illnesses. We see brokenness in friends struggling with separation and divorce. We see alienation when young people turn to drugs and violence. We see despair when we encounter the poor and homeless on our streets. We witness confusion when our civic and religious leaders don't do what is right. We see people being humiliated and ridiculed for their religious beliefs, social status, racial makeup, and sexual orientation.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he could sense the collective sadness, pain, and suffering the people had endured. His immediate response was to show them the compassion of God. His next challenge was to find a way to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Jesus knew that compassion alone was not enough. Compassion must always be matched with right action.

Every day we walk among crowds in the public arena, on the streets, and in the shopping malls. We must remember that every person, on some level, feels helpless and torn apart by a painful experience. Jesus teaches us that in the crowds are many who feel harassed and helpless.

No matter where we go, we must go with a shepherd's heart, ready to offer friends *and* strangers the compassion of God.

***Ponder:*** When have I felt harassed and helpless?

***Prayer:*** Lord, you are the compassion of God in the world. Help me be more sensitive to others' needs and concerns and to share your compassion with them.

***Practice:*** Today I will be faithful in responding compassionately to someone in need.

## YEAR B

*Ezekiel 17:22–24*

*Psalm 92:2–3, 13–14, 15–16*

*2 Corinthians 5:6–10*

*Mark 4:26–34*

[Jesus] also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

MARK 4:30–32

**Reflection:** The secular kingdom conditions us to believe that to be happy, powerful, influential, and successful, we need lots of money, the right connections, a big home, a nice car, a college degree, and a good career. People with power are attractive and draw attention from other power brokers.

Many in the secular kingdom also believe that the world’s big problems can be resolved with the intervention and expertise of powerful private and public institutions.

One thing is certain about the secular kingdom: It has no room for God.

On the other hand, the kingdom of God is like

a mustard seed, small and seemingly insignificant and powerless. The power of the kingdom of God is not in its size, but in the message it proclaims: the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This simple message has the power to change the world. People conditioned by this message understand the power hidden in the seeds of love, compassion, peace, nonviolence, and forgiveness. These seeds are given to the followers of the risen Lord to be planted in the world.

People of the kingdom of God realize that the message of the risen Lord isn't always attractive and might be rejected. Those who choose to live in the kingdom of God must remain faithful to the work of planting good seeds in the hearts of all people.

***Ponder:*** What kingdom do I live in?

***Prayer:*** Lord, you reveal the kingdom of God to all people. Help me bear witness to God's kingdom of compassion and peace.

***Practice:*** Today I will be faithful by performing a small act of kindness.

## YEAR C

2 Samuel 12:7–10, 13

Psalms 32:1–2, 5, 7, 11

Galatians 2:16, 19–21

Luke 7:36–8:3

“Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” Then [Jesus] said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

LUKE 7:47–48

**Reflection:** We feel like a sinner, an outsider, when people tell us we’re not good enough. In our society, some people are made to feel like sinners because of the way they look or because they speak a foreign language, come from a different culture or social background, live a certain way, or practice a different religious tradition.

It’s difficult to show great love when we haven’t received it. We’re not afraid to show great love when people affirm our human dignity, respect us, and recognize our innate goodness. We can embrace others more fully when people appreciate, welcome, and celebrate the richness of our culture, customs, and religious tradition. We can be more generous and compassionate when people have been kind to us.

Jesus offers all sinners the possibility of true



freedom by sharing with them the unconditional love, compassion, and forgiveness of God. When we experience God's unconditional love, we can show great love to strangers. When we experience God's compassion, we can show compassion to the poor and suffering. When we experience God's forgiveness, we can show forgiveness from the heart. Our experience of Jesus compels us to be the presence of God in a world that shows little love and forgiveness.

***Ponder:*** What do I need to seek forgiveness for?

***Prayer:*** Lord, your love and forgiveness bring peace to the world. Open my heart to show great love and forgiveness to all people.

***Practice:*** Today I will be faithful by being understanding and forgiving toward a colleague.

# Monday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## YEAR I

*2 Corinthians 6:1–10*

*Psalm 98:1, 2b, 3–4*

## YEAR II

*1 Kings 21:1–16*

*Psalm 5:2–3ab, 4b–6a, 6b–7*

## YEARS I AND II

*Matthew 5:38–42*

[Jesus taught them, saying,] “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.”

MATTHEW 5:38–39

**Reflection:** Jesus teaches us to have the faith to confront evil with nonviolence. When we refuse to react to violence, abuse, and cruelty with similar acts, we ground ourselves in the law of love. When we reject revenge and retaliation, we adopt the way of Jesus: the way of forgiveness, reconciliation, and compassion.

Every day, vicious acts are perpetrated. We feel powerless when nations declare war against each other. We feel victimized when adults abuse chil-

dren. We feel helpless in the face of escalating anger among young people who act out in the forms of bullying, suicide, and violent assault.

Yet as we reflect on Jesus' teaching, we come to realize we are not powerless. We have the power of faith in God's loving presence. We have the power to treat everyone we meet with respect and courtesy.

We're not victims. We can't control others, but we can make choices that help promote peace, protect the vulnerable, and ensure that all people are treated with dignity and justice.

We're not helpless. We have God's Spirit to give us the courage to face the challenges of our times without losing hope. We have God's Spirit to guide us as we let go of all that prevents us from practicing peace and nonviolence. We have God's Spirit to remind us to trust in God's vision of a human family unified in love and compassion.

***Ponder:*** How do I respond to violence?

***Prayer:*** Lord, you show me a new way to live. Help me choose faith over distrust, love over fear, and nonviolence over aggression.

***Practice:*** Today I will be faithful by deliberately using words of peace.

## Tuesday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

### YEAR I

*2 Corinthians 8:1–9*

*Psalms 146:2, 5–6ab, 6c–7, 8–9a*

### YEAR II

*1 Kings 21:17–29*

*Psalms 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 11, 16*

### YEARS I AND II

*Matthew 5:43–48*

**“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**

**MATTHEW 5:48**

**Reflection:** We become what we see and hear. We learned what it means to be a good person from our parents, neighbors, teachers, coaches, mentors, and friends. They taught us to love our brothers and sisters, to be kind and respectful toward everyone. We observed how the people in our community treated each other. We spoke and acted like the adults. We relied on them to model good behavior; we trusted them to guide us along the pathway of goodness.

We need people of faith to be seen and heard in all areas. We need people of faith to model what it means to live a spiritual life—to be like God. People of faith become the goodness of God by reading and

meditating on God's Word, praying, and practicing charity. We attract others to the spiritual life when our lives reflect what is in our hearts. It's difficult to understand the spiritual life without good role models.

We know we're not perfect and that we don't live in a perfect world. People from all walks of life are starving for goodness. Our children and youth are looking for good mentors. All over the world, we hunger and thirst for strong, stable, spiritual leadership.

Deep in our hearts we know we must be better role models. We must perfect the art of being compassionate, kind, generous, loving, and forgiving toward *everyone*. We must remember that our words and actions influence people's lives. We must be perfect as God is perfect.

***Ponder:*** What about myself must I try to perfect?

***Prayer:*** Lord, you teach us the ways of God. May your life inspire me to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving.

***Practice:*** Today I will be faithful by being a good role model for others.

## Wednesday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

### YEAR I

*2 Corinthians 9:6–11*

*Psalms 112:1bc–2, 3–4, 9*

### YEAR II

*2 Kings 2:1, 6–14*

*Psalms 31:20, 21, 24*

### YEARS I AND II

*Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18*

[Jesus taught them, saying,] “But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

MATTHEW 6:3–4

**Reflection:** We’re accustomed to being asked for information: name, address, cell phone number, e-mail address, what we do for a living, how many children we have, how many cars we own, what our hobbies are, how much exercise we get, how many cups of coffee we drink. Even our machines ask us for login IDs and passwords. It seems like everywhere we go our personal information is being gathered, our privacy being invaded.

Jesus calls us to guard our privacy at certain times. He tells us to give alms in secret, to pray in secret, and to fast in secret. We don't have to reveal our good deeds to anyone. Our goodness becomes self-evident the more we practice generosity, the more we deepen our knowledge of God through prayer, and the more we fast from greed, selfishness, indifference, resentment, gossip, prejudice, and dissatisfaction.

In each of us is the human need to be recognized. Yet as our faith in God's tender love for us grows, we find that our dependency on the approval of other people lessens. We have no need to divulge the good we do because it has become an integral part of who we are, a natural expression of our inner goodness and love. We learn to live from that heart space of goodness, freed from satisfying society's need to know and secure in our knowledge of God's acceptance, love, and compassion.

**Ponder:** In whom do I confide my acts of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting?

**Prayer:** Lord, you see me with eyes of love. Help me let go of my need for others' approval.

**Practice:** Today I will be faithful by doing a kindness for someone in secret.

# Thursday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## YEAR I

*2 Corinthians 11:1–11*

*Psalms 111:1b–2, 3–4, 7–8*

## YEAR II

*Sirach 48:1–14*

*Psalms 97:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7*

## YEARS I AND II

*Matthew 6:7–15*

**“Give us this day our daily bread.”**

**MATTHEW 6:11**

**Reflection:** We know what physical hunger and thirst feel like. We’re fortunate because we have easy access to food and drink. When we’re eating and drinking, we’re not always mindful of our deeper hunger and thirst. We try to ignore that on some level we’re still starving; part of us feels empty and unfulfilled. We can satisfy the needs of the body but not the soul.

We know what spiritual hunger and thirst feel like. We hunger for love, compassion, affirmation, and acceptance. We thirst for inner peace, community, a sense of belonging, friendship, and support. We struggle daily to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst. When we experience spiritual anguish, we



don't fully realize that we really hunger and thirst for communion with God. God satisfies the spiritual longings of our hearts. Without communion with God, we have no life, hope, or peace.

People of faith must always be mindful of our spiritual longings and our dependency on God. Each day, we must reorient our lives toward God. We must remember that we can access God through prayer and that we feed our spiritual life with the food of the Scriptures and the food of the Eucharist. God satisfies our hungry hearts and souls. We're called to share what we have with others.

***Ponder:*** How would I describe and satisfy my spiritual hunger and thirst?

***Prayer:*** Lord, you are the bread of life for the world. Help me be your bread of love, compassion, and peace.

***Practice:*** Today I will be faithful by praying the Our Father for greater peace and love.

## Friday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

### YEAR I

*2 Corinthians 11:18, 21–30*

*Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7*

### YEAR II

*2 Kings 11:1–4, 9–18, 20*

*Psalm 132:11, 12, 13–14, 17–18*

### YEARS I AND II

*Matthew 6:19–23*

[Jesus taught them, saying,] “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

MATTHEW 6:21

**Reflection:** Faith is a treasure that holds us steady in times of sadness, difficulty, or distress. Faith reassures us that God is always with us—loving us, guiding us, comforting us. Faith encourages us to trust in God’s love. Faith calls us to put our lives and wills into God’s loving care.

Faith impels us to ask for help when life’s burdens are too much to bear. Faith teaches us the power of the community to heal and renew. Faith shows us our need for love and companionship.

Faith leads us to deepen our relationship with God through prayer and meditation. Faith drives

our desire for conscious contact with God. Faith is what looks for God and what finds God.

Faith guides our study of sacred Scripture so that we become more intimate with God's Word. Faith gives us Jesus as our example of compassion, forgiveness, and service. Faith translates our study of Scripture into concrete actions of love, peace, and generosity.

Faith supports our intimate connection to the Spirit within us. Faith gives us the courage to follow where the Spirit leads, even when it doesn't seem to make sense. Faith bears witness to the Spirit's joyful and loving energy.

Faith opens our eyes to see God's face in others. Faith opens our ears to hear God's voice in the cries of the poor and alienated. Faith opens our hearts to know that God's treasure of love and goodness abides in the heart of everyone.

***Ponder:*** What do I treasure?

***Prayer:*** Lord, you are always here with me. Deliver me from my fears and grant me the faith to fulfill your law of love.

***Ponder:*** Today I'll be faithful by surrendering to God and letting go of all worries.

# Saturday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

## YEAR I

*2 Corinthians 12:1–10*

*Psalms 34:8–9, 10–11, 12–13*

## YEAR II

*2 Chronicles 24:17–25*

*Psalms 89:4–5, 29–30, 31–32, 33–34*

## YEARS I AND II

*Matthew 6:24–34*

[Jesus taught them, saying,] “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

MATTHEW 6:26

**Reflection:** We think we must do more, achieve more, produce more to prove our value. We think we must give back by volunteering, participating in fundraisers, or taking part in walks to support worthy causes. We think our lives will be judged useful or not useful according to the list of accomplishments in our resumé.

Yet Jesus tells us we’re of more value than the birds that live freely—soaring high, adapting to the rhythms of the seasons, and being fed by God’s

abundance in nature. We have been given the gift of life, made in God's image of love and goodness, and are beloved of God just because we are. God freely pours out love and blessings on us. We do not have to earn God's love. We do not have to give back to God. We do not have to worry about who we are.

Sometimes people we know give us the message that we aren't enough. Sometimes people will tell us they love us and then put conditions on that love. It isn't that way with God. God loves us just the way we are, even when we mistakenly think we're not enough. Every day God gives us everything we need for that day so that we may be messengers of God's hope and peace.

We can stop worrying. We can have faith in our intrinsic goodness and worth as precious children of God and pass on to others what we have received: God's love, compassion, and forgiveness.

**Ponder:** What do I worry about?

**Prayer:** Lord, you bless me with abundant gifts. Grant me the faith to know you will give me everything I need today.

**Practice:** Today I will be faithful by watching the birds of the air.