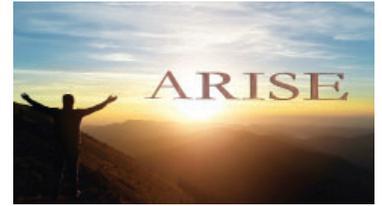


DAILY READING PLAN



Week of May 29, 2022

Arise: Whatever the Hardship, Keep Rising Up

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Six weeks ago, when the worship staff at Prince of Peace began planning for this weekend's worship services, we could not have imagined the unspeakable horror of what took place on Tuesday, May 24, at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas.

As details began emerging, the collective heart of a community, nation and the world began breaking for the families and friends of the 19 students – precious little girls and boys – along with two adults whose lives were lost. As familiar as these tragic events are becoming, we will never be used to them, nor should we. Instead, we now face the challenge of using our voices, positions, and platforms to speak truth into power, love into hate, light into darkness, and life into death.

So once again, we enter profound grief and dwell in it with mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, extended families, and friends with whom we share a common bond as the human family.

Six weeks ago, as we began thinking about this week's theme, "Whatever the Hardship, Keep Rising Up," there was so much we did not know. And yet, amid this current devastation, we turn again, with confidence and hope to what we do know.

As our hearts break and we are at a loss for words, we turn to ancient wisdom, which still speaks comfort and hope. Let's be clear, however. When we turn to scripture, we are not simply attaching words to cover our pain, like a bandage covers a wound. Instead, scripture covers us and reminds us that our refuge and strength can be found in our God, who calls us to claim the power of the resurrection so that whatever the hardship, we can keep rising up.

For these next several days, you are invited to dwell in these ancient passages so that the hope found within them will dwell in you. Lord, have mercy.

Day One: Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Over thirty years have passed since Jesus launched this uprising of faith, hope, and love in our world. Over a dozen years have passed since we traveled with Paul around the Mediterranean. Since then, the uprising has continued to spread. New leaders have arisen. People around the empire have joined us. We know the movement is gaining strength. It is gaining strength largely because of the hardships we have faced. There have been persecutions from outsiders, betrayals by insiders, and stupid arguments that wasted time and drained our energy. There have been divisions, moral scandals, financial improprieties, all kinds of crazy teachings that confuse and distract, power struggles, sad things that, in many ways, show how easy it is to forget what this whole movement is supposed to be about. As we've offended and forgiven each other, as we've experienced rifts and reconciliations, we've learned that God doesn't give us shortcuts around hardships but strengthens us through them.

Day Two: Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Day Three: Read Psalm 34:15, 17-18

The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Day Four: Read Psalm 46:1-7

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Day Five: Read Romans 8:1, 35-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.