

# Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections  
based on this week's lectionary readings

November 24, 2019 Christ the King / Reign of Christ C  
Proper 29C / Ordinary 34C / Pentecost +24

The readings this week:

- Jeremiah 23:1-6 ◦ Psalm 46
- Colossians 1:11-20 ◦ Luke 23:33-43

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

## Inheriting Light

As a photographer, I'm always looking for light. Light as it glows through fall leaves or peeks through a slatted fence. Light that reflects off a pond or window. The contrast of light and shadow.

As a minister, I'm always looking for light. Light that streams into a hospice room. Light that passes between people who care for each other. Light that emanates from goodness.

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. [from Colossians 1]

The inheritance of the saints in light.

This past week I have thought much about those who have gone before us, from whom we have inherited wisdom and understanding, and the strength to act. Also, I'm continuing to "inherit" those things from people I see at work right now. Past and present saints leave a heritage of light.

- ◇ Desert Mothers and Fathers who had deep faith in the future;
- ◇ Communities and individuals who struggled from within the institution of slavery;
- ◇ Oppressed peoples from every time and place who refused to give up;
- ◇ An African-American acquaintance I encountered today who told me he worries we're entering a new era of racial oppression not unlike that of the civil rights days, but who still believes we'll come out stronger on the other side;
- ◇ A young teenaged friend who, with her classmates, plans to work for a brighter future;
- ◇ A transgender young man who speaks out about their experiences in order to help others have courage or understand;
- ◇ Every person I see who is at work for justice, kindness, mercy, and peace.

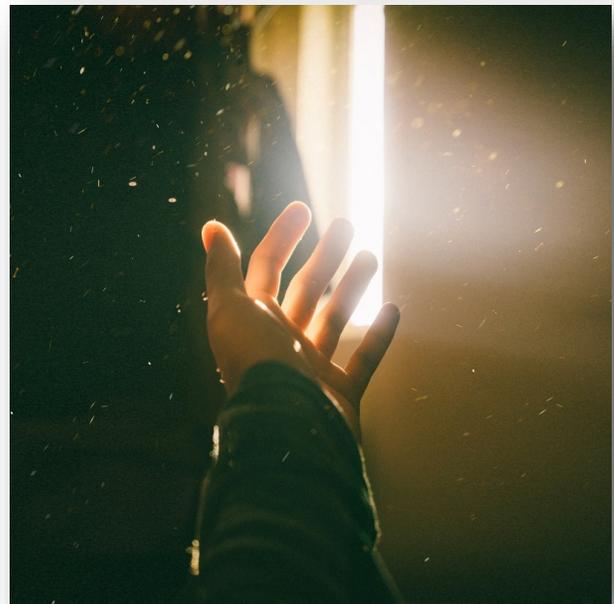
I saw a news story today about a community of people who inspire me by their actions. You can see it [here](#). Natasha Nkhama, a black female student at Baylor University was harassed by a white male who shoved her and called her the N-word. Some of her friends shared the story, and a Twitter conversation ensued. Two days after the incident, nearly three hundred students, faculty, and staff showed up to escort her to class, expressing solidarity and an intolerance of racial bullying.

That was a story I needed to see—not the first part, but the last part. One thing people of faith instinctively understand is that where there is darkness, there is always light.

When others inspire us, we reach out and catch the light they are sending our way, and we repurpose it for our own setting, conveying it to others.

Let light be the inheritance you receive, and the legacy you leave behind.

~ Melissa Bane Sevier, [Contemplative Viewfinder](#)



***"Let light be the inheritance you receive,  
and the legacy you leave behind."***

# Reflecting on the Word



## 1st Reading: [Jeremiah 23:1-6](#)

Why is a shepherd such a good image and prototype to use for a leader of a government, as these kings were supposed to be? How had these shepherds done a poor job – even doing the opposite of what was needed? Who will now be the Shepherd, and how will he and his shepherds set things right? Why is this prophecy a beautiful dream even for us today? Do you know any leaders who have already exemplified this kind of leadership? Even though the people of Judah did not see a literal fulfillment of the oracle in verses 5-6, how do we understand Jesus as its ultimate fulfillment? [Faith Element](#)

## Psalm Reading: [Psalm 46](#)

What troubles are you dealing with? How do you remember that God is in control when everything seems to be falling apart? Our society doesn't like the thought of being still. Being still is another way of surrendering to God. What area of your life do you need to be still and reflect on God? The Psalms have a way of mixing worldly turmoil while still remembering God's sovereignty. Why is it so easy to focus on one or the other, but not usually both at the same time? [First MB Church](#)

## 3rd Reading: [Colossians 1:11-20](#)

Why is the gospel a message of hope? With an increase in wisdom, what should our lives look like? What source are you depending on in order to live life? What implications does the great "citizenship transfer" have for us? How does this reality humble you while also encouraging you to bear fruit and increase in the knowledge of God? How is Christ the image of the invisible God? What does it mean for him to be the "firstborn over all creation"? How much did Jesus Christ create and what difference does this make in your life? Do you really see Jesus as being the "head" of the church? 3. How did God the Father reconcile all things to Himself? Why was reconciliation necessary? How does this reconciliation affect you and what is its result? [Topeka Bible Church](#)

## Praying Toward Sunday

Gracious God,  
Give us spiritual insight and understanding,  
so that we would be able to see things from your point of view. May our words and actions bring credit to Your name and joy to Your heart; may all that we do bear fruit for Your kingdom, and may we come to know and love You more each day. Strengthen us with Your power so that we would be able to joyfully endure whatever comes our way, and give thanks to You even in the midst of pain and suffering. Thank You for rescuing us from the power of darkness, and bringing us into the glorious light of Your kingdom. All praise to Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whom we have found redemption and forgiveness. Amen.

*"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

*"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." ~ Luke 23.42,43*

Not another time and place, beloved,  
but here and now, today  
you are with me in paradise.  
In darkest times I give you my presence.  
In deepest suffering I join you.  
Paradise is not the world out there,  
but our love shared  
even through pain and terror, even death,  
my love for you, my love in you, our oneness.

Jesus, remember me.  
Make me again a member of your realm.  
Make me part of your healing of the world.  
Take me in.  
I surrender to your absolute love.  
Take me in.  
In your hope for the world take me in.  
Even in your suffering, take me in.  
In your entering the pain of the world, take me in.  
In your love, take me in.

~ Steve Garnaas-Holmes, [Unfolding Light](#)

## 4th Reading: [Luke 23:33-43](#)

Reflect on a time when your own mistakes or failures caused you to feel hopeless. Do any of your past mistakes and failures still affect you in the present? How so? Did anything good come out of this hopeless situation? Luke described how Jesus was crucified between two criminals. What might Jesus' position between such people communicate to those watching? Why? Luke includes three statements Jesus made from the cross. What does Jesus' prayer tell us about Him? How might this prayer be a source of hope for us in the midst of despair? What do you think motivated the thief to "hurl abuse" at Jesus? What attitudes might move someone who is clearly guilty to mock and insult Jesus? What attitudes move people to mock and reject Jesus today? Why do you think these two guilty men had such drastically different responses to Jesus? How has your faith in Jesus freed you from the oppression of hopelessness? How might remembering God's grace in freeing you in the past change your perspective on your present difficulties and challenges? [Pinelake](#)