

Reading from the Book: A Selection of Scripture for Challenging Times
(NRSV)

1. Micah 6:6-8

A reading from the prophet Micah...

“With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him (God) with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

2. Psalm 37: 27-31

Depart from evil, and do good;
so you shall abide forever.

For the Lord loves justice;
he (God) will not forsake his (the) faithful ones.
The righteous shall be kept safe forever,
but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

The righteous shall inherit the land,
and live in it forever.

The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,
and their tongues speak justice.

The law of their God is in their hearts;
their steps do not slip.

3. Isaiah 40:27-31

Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
“My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He (God) does not faint or grow weary;
his (God’s) understanding is unsearchable.

He (God) gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

4. Isaiah 30:18-21

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you.
For the Lord is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.

Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He (God) will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he (God) hears it, he (God) will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or

when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

5. Matthew 5:1-12 *The Beatitudes*

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness 'sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

6. Zechariah 7:8-10

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

7. Amos 5:18-24

(The prophet, Amos, upset with what he was seeing around him said...)

Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord!

Why do you want the day of the Lord?

It is darkness, not light;

as if someone fled from a lion,

and was met by a bear;

or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall,

and was bitten by a snake.

Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light,

and gloom with no brightness in it?

I hate, I despise your festivals,

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals

I will not look upon.

Take away from me the noise of your songs;

I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

But let justice roll down like waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

8. Matthew 5: 38-42

“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; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat,

give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

9. Luke 18:1-8 (The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge)

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his (the) chosen ones who cry to him (God) day and night? Will he (God) delay long in helping them? I tell you, he (God) will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

10. Isaiah 1: 14-17

Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.

When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,

learn to do good;

seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

11. Matthew 5: 43-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. ’But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father (God) in heaven; for he (God) makes his (the) sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father (God) is perfect.