



THANKS BE TO
GOD

Devotional Guide - Oct. 16th -Nov. 6th, 2022

“Heavenly Father, how are you inviting me to participate?”





Thank you for being a part of what God is doing at Church of the Cross (COTC). This is an important season in our shared life.

This devotional, as a part of the Thanks Be To God Campaign, is intended to help you engage in Scripture and spiritual practices over the coming weeks as you pray “Heavenly Father, how are you inviting me to participate?”. Most days you’ll find a passage of Scripture and a short reflection with a few prompts. On some of the days, short collects have also been included. Thank you to David Taylor for writing these and making them available.

The twenty-one devotionals included here are focused on the themes of God’s provision, our thanksgiving, wealth, the church, and her mission. I hope that they assist you in drawing near to Jesus, and deepen our love for and allegiance to Him.

In Christ,

Peter+
October 2022



Day 1

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” - Colossians 3:16-17

The “General Thanksgiving” is among the most profound prayers found in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Written by Edward Reynolds, a British bishop in the 17th century, the prayer concludes the services of both morning and evening prayer. It reads:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

“The blessings of this life.” What particular blessings emerge today as you turn to God in thanksgiving?

“The means of grace” points us to the sacraments and the Church. Are there experiences of God’s grace in the church and through the sacraments that you might be able to name?

As we come to the table, as we gather with the people of God, we can have confidence that, whatever our experience, His grace is present and working. The prayer points us, above all, to the “immeasurable love” of God shown to us in Jesus’ redemption.

At the start of this 21 day journey together with Jesus, let us take a few minutes to bless and thank Jesus for the gift of redemption in Him. Even if that feels abstract and distant, we engage in the practice of praise and thanksgiving as an act of faith, of the sure and certain hope we have. In the coming days, may we live into this hope as we pray and reflect on the General Thanksgiving.



Day 2

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. - John 15:15

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

The General Thanksgiving begins with a description of ourselves as “unworthy servants.” The prayer sets us here, in a lowered place, that we might better understand and feel the towering heights of God’s mercy and loving-kindness.

At the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry he specifically calls the disciples friends, rather than servants. In John 15:15 Jesus suggests that this status of friendship relates in particular to their knowledge of the “master’s business.” Through Jesus his disciples have become aware of God’s purposes in a richer and more complete way. To be a friend of Jesus is to experience a particular relationship with God, but also it is to be aware of how God is at work in the world. It is to be caught up in those purposes.

What are some ways that you have come to know God’s business through Jesus?

What are the ways God might be specifically inviting you to participate in His purposes and plans?

As we pray the General Thanksgiving today, let us do so with an attentiveness to the ways our lives might be given up to God’s service in holiness and righteousness.



Day 3

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” - Romans 12:1-2

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

In the second part of Reynolds’ prayer there is a petition for us to have “truly thankful hearts.” More than the appearance of thankfulness the request is that our inner lives would be shaped by gratitude, arising out of an awareness of God’s mercies. Rather than simply an inward disposition, however, the prayer suggests that such a true inward realization of gratitude to God will manifest itself in more than words or lip-service, but in the “giving up” of all we are and have to the service of God. The language of “walking before” points us to life with Jesus and accountable to His vision of the good and flourishing life.

As you pray “Heavenly Father, how are you inviting me to participate?” are there specific areas of your life that come to mind where you long to live with greater holiness and righteousness? Do you feel the need to grow in a greater awareness of God’s mercies, that you might have a truly thankful heart? In both these ways, call upon the Holy Spirit to move in your life.



Day 4

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.” - Exodus 16:4

Over the next few days we'll be focusing on the chapter of Exodus 16, which describes God's provision of manna in the wilderness. Take a few minutes to read and reflect on the passage now. Make a note of words, phrases, or thematic elements that stand out to you.

Exodus 16 describes the Israelites just over two weeks out from their deliverance from Egypt, facing a significant journey in the wilderness. This is the context of their grumbling in verses 3 and 4. Considering this context, what might be giving rise to their grumbling here? In what ways can you identify with the feelings potentially behind their grumbling?

In the midst of our lives, and especially when God is leading us into new paths or challenges, we are tempted to despair. As you think about your own frustrations and fears, or your own temptations toward grumbling, what is the bad news that you find yourself believing? About your circumstances? About the nature of God?

As you think about how God might be inviting you to participate in this season at COTC, how might you identify with the Israelites in this passage? What promises of God might you cling to for the future?

A Prayer Against Living in an Economy of Scarcity

O Lord, you who own the cattle on a thousand hills, preserve us from living in an economy of scarcity where nothing and no one is good enough, causing us to live stingy and self-absorbed lives. Fill our hearts instead with your life-giving Spirit, so that we may be generous-spirited in all that we do and with all whom we meet this day. I pray this in the name of the One who makes more than enough. Amen.



Day 5

When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’” - Exodus 16:15-16

The story of Exodus 16 is one of God’s sustained and ongoing provision for His people. Yet that provision takes place in a daily fashion. The Israelites receive enough food for each day, or two days, in the case of the sabbath. This provision continues for the full forty years of their wilderness wandering.

How might the daily nature of God’s provision relate to the notion of a test mentioned in verse 4? It would appear that beyond provision for the physical needs of the Israelites, God’s intention is that they would depend upon Him and live according to His instructions and purposes. The testing occurs in relation to these desires of God.

As you consider the whole of Exodus 16, what picture of God’s character emerges? Notice that His response to the Israelites grumbling is the provision of food, and that it is only Moses, in verse 20, who is described as being angry with the Israelites. How does the picture of God here shape our understanding of His test and desire for the people of God to draw near to Him in dependence? In which arenas of your life, related to the “Thanks Be To God” campaign or not, do you feel God’s invitation to greater and more consistent dependence upon Him? Take a few minutes in silence and stillness to listen to the invitation of God, our provider.



Day 6

Moses said, "This is what the Lord has commanded: "Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt." - Exodus 16:32

The command to remember is repeated throughout the Bible. In both the Old and New Testament, the people of God are exhorted to keep alive the memory of all that God has done for them, from generation to generation. The call to remember is also made in Exodus 16. The people of Israel are instructed to keep a portion of what God has provided as a tactile reminder of God's provision and care. Unlike other manna that has been kept, this portion endures. Part of God's plan for His people is that they remember what he has done for them.

What are the specific instances of God's provision and care in your life? Take a few minutes to list them. How can you make them a prayer? You might make that a prayer of remembrance, recalling God's personal acts of sustaining and blessing you.. In what ways do you struggle to remember the goodness and faithfulness of Jesus? What might help you to keep alive the memory of His grace?

What does God's personal provision and care in your life remind you of regarding His character? How does such knowledge inform your perspective about the future? As you consider your participation in this campaign, how can the memory of God's goodness shape your reflection, prayer, and action?

A Prayer Against the Temptation to Doubt God's Goodness

O Lord, you who cast out demons and heal those who are oppressed by the devil, speak your word of disarming authority against all evil powers that would cause me to doubt your goodness in my life, so that I might be astonished afresh by your mighty deeds this day. I pray this in your Mighty Name. Amen.



Day 7

Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. - John 6:11

John chapter 6 includes Jesus' reenactment of God's provision of manna in the wilderness. Read John 6:1-15, paying attention to any words, phrases, or thematic elements that are particularly resonant to your spirit. What connections can you make to the Exodus 16 text?

Beyond sufficient provision, the picture in John 6 is one of abundance. There is as much food as the people want. The 12 baskets left over, in verse 13, is an image of a bountiful amount, enough for the 12 tribes of Israel. For as much as the people of God need, Jesus is sufficient, abundantly so.

In this story with whom do you find yourself identifying with? Are you among the crowd, hungry and longing for what Jesus can offer? Do you count yourself with the disciples, incredulous about how Jesus' abundant provision might be made known? Can you identify with the young boy offering the little he has? By the power of Jesus, the little that the boy can offer becomes so much more; more than enough.

In verse 12, Jesus instructs his followers to "let nothing be wasted." For the boy in this story, ensuring that nothing is wasted meant giving up what he had to Jesus' purposes. As you consider your life and resources in the light of Jesus' abundant provision and multiplicative power, what might it mean to "let nothing be wasted"?

"Nothing I jealously guard is truly mine. Nothing I freely give up is ever lost." - The Celtic Book of Daily Prayer



Day 8

“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” - John 6:25-51

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his book *On Loving God*, meditates upon Psalm 73:26’s words describing the Lord as “the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” He describes the love of God that is for God alone, and not the blessings He provides, as the purest and highest form of love we can offer God.

This encouragement connects with Jesus’ words here in John 6. Jesus directs his hearers to his own person as the only “bread of life” that can satisfy. This is a bold and audacious claim, especially in the context of God’s provision for the people of Israel in the wilderness.

In what ways is God’s provision for us most clearly seen in Jesus? Are there aspects of what has been provided through Jesus that are particularly meaningful to you at this time?

Jesus contrasts the bread that he is with the manna provided in the wilderness. In what ways is he better? As you think about God’s material provision in your life, in what ways is the gift of Jesus himself better?

It seems as though the crowd around Jesus in John 6 had set their focus on material provision over and above receiving Jesus as the true bread, come down from heaven. In what ways do you see the same temptation at play in your life? What might it mean to embrace Jesus more fully as your portion forever? What might the effect be? What steps might you be willing to take toward this?

A Prayer for Daily Bread

O Lord, you who are the Bread of Life, help us, we pray, to be content with the bread that you give us this day, neither grasping for more for fear of being in want tomorrow, nor shrinking away for fear that we do not deserve it, so that we might feel sated with your good provision. We pray this in the name of God our Provider. Amen.



Day 9

Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. - Deuteronomy 8:6-11

These verses are part of a larger section in Deuteronomy 8 focused on the people of God's relationship with wealth. Take a few minutes to read the whole chapter.

In Christopher Wright's *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, he points to this text as an example of the "balanced commentary" on wealth in the Hebrew Scriptures. These verses contain both the promise of material blessing, related to entry into the Promised Land, but also the warning (perhaps even the expectation) that such material blessing will lead the people of God to forget him. In the verses following, pride and arrogance, connected to a sense of having produced one's own wealth, are pointed to as the vices arising from a place of wealth. Those who have eaten and are satisfied so easily forget the Lord.

Verse 11 points to the practice of praise as an essential aspect of not forgetting the Lord. The people are specifically instructed to praise God for the gift of their land, through which they are able to gain material provision and blessing.

How might this kind of praise function to keep them from arrogance and pride? How might praise, in a variety of forms, function to similarly protect us? In relation to this campaign, how do you see the blessings and warnings associated with wealth in the Bible at play in your own life?

A Prayer of Thanksgiving for God's Provision

O Lord, you who promise us the "fat of the land" and save the best wine for last, we thank you for your generous provision in our lives and ask that we might live in your economy of abundance this day, so that we might be generous in word and in deed to all whom we meet. We pray this in the name of the One who makes more than enough. Amen.



Day 10

*Surely the righteous will never be shaken;
they will be remembered forever.
They will have no fear of bad news;
their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.
They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor,
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn will be lifted high in honor.*

- Psalm 112:6-9

The great Christian thinker and bishop, Basil the Great, in his “Homily 7: To the Rich,” describes a counterintuitive approach to wealth in the kingdom of God. He proclaims, “*When wealth is scattered in the manner in which our Lord directed, it naturally returns, but when it is gathered, it naturally disperses. If you try to keep it, you will not have it; if you scatter it, you will not lose it.*”

According to St. Basil, following the Lord’s direction in the dispersal of our wealth is the surest means of securing oneself. From passages like Ps. 112, we see that generosity precedes freedom and security.

What questions does this calculus raise for you, in your own relationship to wealth and perhaps regarding this campaign and COTC’s common life? How have you seen the relationship between wealth scattered and gathered that Basil describes play out? Are there stories of God’s faithfulness to the generous and righteous that might inform your own engagement and practice in this season?

A Prayer Against Miserliness

O Lord, you who rescue us from an economy of scarcity, deliver me, I pray, from a tight-fisted spirit and a miserly heart—which, I confess, reflect a fear that you will not deal generously with me—so that I might be liberated this day to give generously to others of all that I am and have. I pray this in the joyful certainty that I have a good Father in heaven who gives generously to all his children, including to me. Amen.



Day 11

Psalm 23

Today is the halfway point through this devotional. For today, read Psalm 23 in lectio divina, listening for the Holy Spirit's prompting. Prior to reading, invite God to be with you and to speak to you. Read the passage three times, pausing for a minute or so between each reading.

For the first reading, simply pay attention to any words or phrases in the psalm that particularly stand out to you.

With the second reading, pay attention to any emotions or desires that the words of the psalm stir up.

On the third and final reading, consider any sense of invitation you have from God in light of the words of Psalm 23.

Close in prayer, thanking God for His Word and the way He has met you. You might consider writing down or sharing with someone anything you sense the Lord has done in this time.



Day 12

“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.” - Proverbs 9:17

In his book *Faith & Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* Justo Gonzalez writes that for early “Christian teachers...all property is alien to its owners because it ultimately belongs to God.” This teaching stood in contrast to the prevailing notion of the time in the Roman empire, which emphasized the absolute nature of property rights. It’s also a radically different way of conceiving of our property today. Many Christian thinkers of this time conceived of gifts to the poor (alms-giving) as a way of returning to God the wealth one had received.

As you think about your possessions, how might viewing them in some sense as alien to you change the way you treat them? What might make it difficult to conceive of our property in this way? Are there practices (of fasting, thanksgiving, giving, prayer, etc.) that might help you conceive of your property as belonging ultimately to God?

Take a few minutes to pray that God would help you and us as a community to see our possessions (including the property at 8140 Exchange Dr.) as belonging to Him. Ask for the Holy Spirit’s leading that we might use what we have been given, personally and corporately, in concert with God’s plans and purposes.

A Prayer for Living in an Economy of Abundance

O Lord, you who are bountiful and generous, help us, we pray, to live in your economy of abundance this day, so that we might become signs of your generative life to all who may be crippled and crushed under by an economy of scarcity. We pray this in the name of the One who turns water into wine. Amen.



Day 13

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” - Matthew 16:17-20

In this famous, and much debated passage, Jesus responds to Peter’s confession about Jesus’ identity with these promises. Our focus today is upon the implicit promise Jesus makes that he will build his church, and that the gates of Hades will not overcome it. In this passage we have profound assurance that Jesus is building his church, and that it will not be overcome. That is good news! However, we also receive information that we as the church are involved in a conflict. To be a follower of Jesus, to be the church, is to live in the clash of two rival kingdoms: the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of Hades, of death and hell.

Have you experienced or witnessed the conflict that Jesus alludes to here? In what ways?

How is the promise that Jesus will build his church a comfort to you? In what way is this promise currently most meaningful to you?

As you think about the church as an instrument of Jesus’ kingdom that is not overcome but even advancing against the kingdoms of darkness present in the world, what images come to mind? What images are most exciting for you?



Day 14

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- 1 Peter 2:4-5

In these verses we are given a particular vision of the church. As a people, the church is likened to a spiritual house, intended to be a holy priesthood, offering sacrifices made acceptable to God through Jesus. This is imagery and language related to Israelite worship from the Old Testament. It emphasizes our interdependence (built together into a structure), as well as our common priestly call. It also provides a particular vision of our collective and personal vocations. In our common worship, in our individual acts of service, care, peacemaking, etc. we are together offering sacrifices of praise to God. As mixed-motive as we are, as feeble as our efforts might be, our acts of worship are made perfect in Jesus Christ.

As you reflect on these verses. What is good news to you? How does this language and imagery give you a fresh perspective on your participation in the life of the church? How might these verses frame your own praying and discernment regarding the “Thanks Be To God” campaign?



Day 15

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

1 Peter 2:9-10

These famous verses further develop our vision for the church. Peter offers both descriptions of the church as well as language regarding its mission. Notice the way he weaves together the idea of our identity as “God’s special possession” with our calling to declare His praises.

How might you apply the idea that God has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light to your life? In what ways is this statement true about you and your relationship to Jesus?

How is the idea that we (the pronoun is plural) as the church are God’s special possession, a comfort or encouragement to you? In what ways, especially in light of its connection to the calling to declare God’s praises, is this a challenge? How might these words about the church’s identity and mission inform your praying and discernment of your participation? How might we, corporately and personally, more fully declare the praises of God, who has brought us into his wonderful light?



Day 16

We receive you into the fellowship of the Church. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in the royal priesthood of all his people. - From the service of Holy Baptism, The Book of Common Prayer, 2019

These words, using some language from 1 Peter chapter 2, are pronounced over the newly baptized at the end of the service of baptism we regularly hold at COTC. They are a call over the life of every baptized follower of Jesus. Take a moment to reflect upon the significance of being received into the fellowship of Christ' church. Consider the reality that you belong through faith in Jesus Christ!

Take a few minutes to also reflect on the three charges outlined here. How do these three elements play a role in our common life as a church? Are their particular examples that resonate for you? Do these three elements relate at all to your sense of the Holy Spirit's invitation to participate in this season? How might these elements connect to the specific hopes related to the Thanks Be To God campaign?

A Prayer of Consecration to God

O Lord, you who are mighty to save, rescue us, we pray, from "the world, the flesh and the devil" and from all that would tempt us away from you, so that we might be freed to love you with all our heart, mind, soul and strength in all that we do this day. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



Day 17

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. - Matthew 4:23-24

Earlier in Matthew 4 Jesus begins his public earthly ministry by announcing in verse 17, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” In the verses of above we have a description of Jesus’ ministry in relation to this announcement of good news. Specifically, he taught, proclaimed, and healed. These are the primary actions of Jesus’ ministry. As a community of Jesus followers they are also the primary actions that make up our ministry.

How do you see teaching, proclamation, and healing taking place in our shared life at COTC? In what ways do you see yourself (either at COTC or in your own daily life) participating in these aspects of Jesus’ ministry?

When you think about COTC’s future and further development in our teaching, proclaiming, and healing ministry at the 8140 Exchange Dr. property, what most excites you?

Take a few minutes to pray for COTC to increase as a community that participates in the ongoing ministry of Jesus.

A Prayer for Faithfulness to God’s Kingdom

O Lord, you whose kingdom is not of this world, strengthen, we pray, our allegiance to your kingdom, deepen our loyalties to your global Body, and increase our longing for a better country, so that we might love our nation and our neighbors in Jesus’ name as pilgrims in a strange land. We pray this in the name of the One who calls us to be salt and light. Amen.



Day 18

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- Matthew 28:16-20

This text is famously referred to as “The Great Commission.” Notice also the great claim Jesus makes, and the great comfort he offers. First, Jesus claims “all authority in heaven and on earth.” This is a staggering claim! The implications are astounding. There is literally no place or thing that exists outside the scope of this claim, the scope of Jesus’ authority. The one who welcomes sinners, children, and strangers, the one who is gentle and lowly, the one who offers himself to us and for us, now has total authority in all of reality.

Second, Jesus offers the comfort of his unending presence with his followers. He who has total authority over all things is totally committed to them, to us. There is no situation we face in which Jesus is not with us. Think of the security and rest this offers to us as the church. In this promise there is the hope of care, of guidance, and of triumph through Jesus.

It is in the context of this great claim and great comfort that we can joyfully receive Jesus’ great commission. We can take up the work of making disciples of the nations, teaching all that Jesus commanded, and baptizing in the name of the Triune God with a lightness and confidence.

Take a few minutes to reflect upon Jesus’ great claim and great comfort. How are they good news for you today? Pray for the church and yourself in our carrying out of Jesus’ great commission. How is the Holy Spirit inviting you to participate? How might COTC live into these three great realities (claim, comfort, and commission) as we inhabit the property at 8140 Exchange Dr.?

A Prayer to be the Light of Christ in the World

Lord Christ, you who are the light of the world, may we live as children of the light today, so that we might be emissaries of all that is right and true and good in your kingdom. We pray this for your sake and for the sake of this world that you so love. Amen.



Day 19

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

-Matthew 13:44-46

The kingdom of heaven is valuable. It's worth paying any price. That is the focus of the parable statements Jesus makes here. His words invite us to consider if the shape of our lives reflects the inestimable value of the kingdom. What are we willing to sacrifice? To make available for the sake of God's kingdom?

The responses of the man and the merchant are both warranted and exuberant. They didn't plan to sell everything that day, but what they found changed everything. Our neighbors, our city, might not be expecting to find the kingdom as they dig, as they scour the marketplace, and yet something of surpassing worth awaits them. How is the Spirit calling us to participate in helping our neighbors, our city, and the world know where to look? How might our generosity make this possible?

As you reflect upon these words of Jesus, and some of their implications, take a minute to make the prayer below your own.

A Prayer for Being Generous-Spirited

O Lord, you who bless the widow's mite, grant me the grace this day to be generous-spirited in all that I say and do, and may I do so in an uncalculating and un-resentful manner, so that I might become tangible evidence of your economy of abundance. I pray this in the name of the One who multiplies the loaves and the fishes. Amen.



Day 20

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. - Ephesians 3:20-21

As this devotional comes to a close and we make our commitments in the Thanks Be To God Campaign, take a few minutes to reflect on this passage and the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ. As you reflect upon his goodness and power, are there particular things you might ask him regarding any fears and anxieties or hopes and dreams you have related to this commitment? Is there a specific way you might invite the Holy Spirit to be working in your life?

In this text Paul's words invite us to consider the cosmic scale of the worship offered to God in Jesus and the church, *"throughout all generations, for ever and ever."* Our life and work at COTC is caught up and a part of this call to bring glory to God throughout all generations. Our hope is that this season of generosity will contribute to a future of faithful kingdom work among us for years and decades to come. Take a few minutes to reflect upon the specific ways God may continue to receive glory in and through COTC in the years to come.

As we think and pray about our commitments, let us join together in praying toward this end, and let us listen to the Spirit's invitation regarding our specific part to play, now and into the future.

A Prayer for Participating in God's Good Purposes

O Holy Spirit, you who are alive and at large in the world, open my eyes this day to perceive how you are at work around me—healing, rescuing, restoring and reconciling—so that I might participate in the good purposes of God in Christ that you wish to do in and through me. I pray this in the name of the One who makes dead bones rise to life. Amen.



Day 21

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

On this last day of the campaign, we return to the “General Thanksgiving” in the Book of Common Prayer. Take a moment to read and pray through these words once again.

What are the specific things you can be thankful to God for? Take a moment to thank God aloud for the ways He has shown His goodness and grace to you and to our church community.

In your own words, invite the Holy Spirit to empower you to live a life of response to the grace and goodness God has shown to us.