



2019 YEAR OF SCRIPTURE Monthly Devotions December 2019

Author: Pastor Eric & Deacon Erin Bodenstab

Introduction

Congratulations on making it to December! The Year of Scripture is nearly over. Before we get ahead of ourselves, though, let us remember the end. And by that, we mean THE end—the last vision that John has in Revelation of the end of all things.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:1-5, NRSV)

This is God's certain future. How we live in the meantime is less certain, but God has hopes for us. The letters that we read this month, from 1 Corinthians through Jude, point to things in the early church that were going right and things that were going wrong as the first Christians tried to live into those hopes. Like them, we also get some things right and some things wrong. Fortunately, God keeps promises with or without our help, and forgives our sin, renewing our hopes as we await that final, beautiful vision.

Gifts and Guidance

Depending on time and council size, read and discuss some or all of the following passages as a large group, or break into groups or pairs and report back when you're finished.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 *“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...”*

- Why does God give us these gifts of the Spirit? (See verse 7.)
- How is God's certain future present in this passage?

Read: Galatians 5:16-26 *“By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit...”*

- Why, according to this passage, is it so hard to live as a disciple of Jesus? (See verse 17.)
- How is God's certain future present in this passage?

Read: 2 Peter 1:3-11 *“His divine power has given us everything needed...”*

- Does it surprise you that mutual affection and love support godliness? Explain.
- How is God's certain future present in this passage?



Read: 1 John 4:7-21 *“Beloved, let us love one another...”*

- What makes love perfect, and why does that matter? (See verse 17.)
- How is God's certain future present in this passage?

Remembering God's Future

In Advent, we remember Jesus' first coming and Jesus' second coming, looking back to celebrate God's incarnation and looking forward to the culmination of God's promises. As Christians and as congregations, God calls us to do the same with our own lives and histories—to reflect on how God has been present in our lives and to anticipate Jesus' return. Remembering the past can give us reason to trust God and reason to repent. Remembering the future can motivate us to live into that vision now.

Prayer

Beloved Creator, hasten the day when faith will become sight, and by the Spirit, empower us to live into your future now. Amen.

