

Monday

Read Leviticus 23:33–43

It is good to remember and remembering the works of God is an important function of the religious life of the Hebrew people in the Old Testament. The Feast of Booths is a time to remember the faithfulness of God in delivering the people from Egypt.

I doubt that this weekend will become one that we will want to live and commemorate throughout our generations, but it is good to remember so that we can reflect and recall the goodness of God.

What is your story about this weekend when the pandemic really “hit” and daily life seemed to turn on a dime? As you remember, take some time today and reflect on all that you, your family, your church, and the wider world have been through this past year. Where have you seen God work this past year? How do you wish God had worked differently (this is an OK question... God won't judge you for it)? What do you have to celebrate as a child of God today?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 25:31–46

When you have thought about the final judgment in the past (if you have), what do you see in your mind's eye? How well does that conform to how Jesus speaks of judgment in this passage in Matthew? It might not be readily apparent when you read this passage in Matthew, so you might need to examine it again, but how is Jesus' self-sacrificing love sealed on the cross demonstrated in this passage?

Wednesday

Read John 5:19–29

When Jesus comes he will be the same Jesus that we see witnessed to us in scripture. When Christ comes he will not have changed his identity or altered his purpose. He will be the same Jesus who is proclaimed in the gospels. There are not two different Jesus Christs - one who comes in grace and mercy, ministers to the sick, poor, and spiritually broken, and sacrifices himself for our sins; and then one who comes in wrath and

vengeance – there is one Jesus who maintains his identity and purpose. As Hebrews 13:8 teaches us, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Jesus is and will remain a loving judge. Jesus can be a loving judge and uphold God's righteousness and justice – the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. You can judge your child to be in the wrong with love and justice. You don't have to work yourself into a hateful lather, foaming at the mouth to make such a judgment. You can judge people who engage in certain behavior to be in the wrong with love and justice. You don't have to hate them or want to exercise vengeance on them to know they are wrong. We do ourselves and our Lord a great disservice in deciding that we must despise those with whom we disagree – even when they are deep, important disagreements. After all, I've never heard of anyone who was hated into becoming a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ. Neither does Jesus have to be angry, vengeful, or wrathful to judge. Just as God exercises love and mercy in the Old Testament by acting decisively to deal with the cancerous pandemic of sin, so too can Jesus judge with love and mercy and be triumphant over the powers of sin, evil, and death.

As you think and pray about the nature of judgment, know that you will continue to need to make judgments in this life. Christian ethicist Oliver O'Donovan writes, “Society cannot live without judgment.” Try as we might sometimes, we cannot live without judgment. But we can embrace Jesus as we judge. How should Jesus be more involved in your judgments?

Thursday

Read Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

By what standard will Jesus judge? He will judge on the basis of his self-giving love to God and to us, which is fulfilled on the cross. This is the standard by which he will judge because there is no higher standard. Jesus' sacrificial love is the concrete fulfillment of God's Law which is the ultimate basis of all justice and peace. Our lives are redeemed by Jesus' sacrificial love and we, and the entire Creation, will be judged on the basis of his sacrificial love. Just as God is merciful in Psalm 107 (and throughout scripture!!!) so too will Jesus be a merciful judge.

Friday

As we prepare for Sunday worship, please read and reflect upon John 14:15-31.

