

#2: God is Always Near

Listen to track 2 of *Songs of Justice and Peace*.

Scripture:

"I am with you always." Matthew 28: 20

Devotions:

Seeing God in nature is a fairly easy task. We marvel at the grandeur of the sky, sunsets on water can leave us breathless, the majesty of mountains is incredible, flowers awaken our senses with their beauty, and the creatures that fly, run, crawl or swim and share the earth with us are amazing. Yes indeed, God is there! And very quickly we are moved to acknowledge God's presence in creation and in that moment of observance we may even add a brief prayer of thanksgiving for God's creativity.

It is easy to see God in the beauty of creation. More difficult is to see God in poverty and suffering. In a familiar parable of the end times (Matt. 25:31-46), the King rewards those who have seemed to be "the least of these" – the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, those in tatters, the sick, the imprisoned. To see God in the brokenness of this world and to respond to that brokenness is to see God in a bigger way.

This is our call to servant ministry: to respond to a broken world by seeing God in a bigger way.

And we have help. As we hear the final verse of this song, God's word, the broken bread, and the prayers of the people will sustain, strengthen and renew us in our call. Notice that the word "trust" is repeated often in this verse. In responding to injury and injustice, we are called to trust -- trust that Someone greater than us is in charge; trust that striving for justice and peace is God's will; and trust that as we serve a broken world, "God is always near."

Prayer:

Ever-present God, we see you in the beauty of nature, hear you in the laughter of children, feel you in the embrace of a friend. By the power of your Spirit, help us to also see you in the face of the homeless, hear you in the sobs of the broken-hearted, and feel you in the handshake of a stranger. In your Holy Name we pray, Amen.

Reflection:

Where do I go to appreciate God's presence in the beauty of creation? Where do I see God's face in "the least of these?" When has my trust in God wavered and when does it soar?

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The Lutheran Deaconess Association prepares people for ministries of service to those in need in the church and the world; supports deaconesses in their varied ministries; encourages the whole people of God in their own Christian service; and assists the church in its diaconal mission.

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