

Jeremiah speaks to Israel a word of comfort in the midst of their exile. They have followed false gods and broken God's covenant and still God proclaims God will find a way to put the gift of the law into their hearts. God promises that God is with the people, forgives by forgetting their sin, and writes the law in their hearts. Not only are the people forgiven, but God also proclaims that it a new beginning—their betrayal not remembered as they live into the covenant again in a new way. God edges closer to the people that they all may “know” God—from greatest to the least. This radical understanding of covenant and forgiveness focuses on God's own care of the people.

In the Gospel lesson from John, it is not an image of covenant; it is Jesus sharing that God desires to “draw all people to myself.” Jesus—a knowing Jesus in the Gospel of John—seems to be pointing to his death, Resurrection, and Ascension. The metaphor of a single grain of wheat invites not only his followers, but the Greeks and all of us—into pondering a mystery. A single grain on the ground dies, “but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Our lives are upended, challenged, and transformed if we follow Jesus. If we turn and follow Jesus we are changed. How do we uncover this self that is transformed by following Jesus? We begin to pray, serve, wonder, praise, and forgive...and do it with others.



Wheat field with Lark, Van Gogh

Explore the Way of Love: **PRAY**



Our day to day lives can be hurried and busy. We have so many things to do and so little time to do them. With devices and media asking for our time, so much to do and hear and say – it can make us feel overwhelmed and isolated. It can make our relationships challenging, as we struggle to connect.

The practice of the Way of Love, following in the footsteps of Jesus, tells us that God wants to break through the noise and busy-ness of the world and be able to have a relationship with us – with you. Not as a distant god in a far-off sky, or as a theory or an ideal or a metaphor, but a presence, dwelling with us, here and now. And the way to make that connection is to Pray.

As the Psalmist tells us: “The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.” Jesus taught us that it is nourishing and strengthening to intentionally take time to pray. The daily practice of making time and space to speak with God, to listen to God, or to simply be with God, clears a pathway for God to enter our lives.

Jesus told us how we can talk with God: We can praise God and thank God for all that has been done. We can tell God about our troubles, and God will listen. We can ask God for healing and forgiveness, and God will help restore us. We can ask God for protection, and face the world with courage. Or we can simply receive God's spirit, in faith that when we make space to pray, God is with us.

We can pray alone and know that we are not alone in this world. We can pray together, whether just two or three of us or a whole community, and find a whole new level of connection with those who are on the journey with us. As Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The Way of Love is not a static practice, in which we read a book of rules and perform the exercises to become improved people. It is a dynamic practice, and part of the active process of transforming our lives is opening up the channels of communication with God, giving and taking, talking, and listening, like electricity flowing through a

cable or streams that connect a river to the sea. We create a connective flow with a God who loves and cares about us, who and where we are on a daily basis, and wants to know how you are doing today.

Are you making a commitment to incorporate the regular practice of prayer into your life? Is there a place where you can gather with others in the presence of the divine?

Learn more about the Way of Love at episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove. You can find suggestions on getting started and going deeper with Praying at iam.ec/explore.

Office of Formation of the Episcopal church