

❧ economy of gift ❧

In a world where we experience the “economy of exchange” on a daily basis, from our bank accounts to our relationships, viewing the love we offer to others through the lens of the “economy of gift” will radically alter the way we give and receive. To love the other with expectations attached is not love; it is exchange. This goes something like: If you do this for me, then I’ll do that for you. Let us rather seek to offer our love as a gift, and as we do so to recognize that we are operating within a new economy that reverses and challenges our notions of love and sets us on the path to life.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Loving someone who loves you is easy love.
Loving someone who doesn't love you is "hard love." Disciples of Jesus are to "hard love" those who don't love them. In spite of their broken, insufficient, and inadequate ways, disciples' love is nevertheless to be an active, seeking, and compassionate love, grounded in following God, who is love.



One of the greatest gifts of God is excess. We never come to the end of God, the love of God, creation, others, or ourselves. To explore this living excess is far from an auto-pilot mechanism, and closer to an imaginative seeking to understand the past, present, and future well. Walking with God, the other, and ourselves in creation is a humble endeavor and a communal enterprise founded on love.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

From *The Prelude*, Book XII, 1850
by William Wordsworth

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,
And lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.

Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy,
Words are but under-agents in their souls;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them: this I speak
In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
For his own service; knoweth us, **loveth** us,
When we are unregarded by the world.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Jesus gives us some powerful words in Luke 6: “But I tell you who listen: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

Tangible expressions of grace and love are crucial markers for the Christian community and for others to come to know Christ through it. Our acts of love or lovelessness have a massive power to redemptively embrace or ungraciously reject others. To see ourselves rightly is to recognize that we are seen by God, who calls us to missionally testify to his love in a broken and hurting world.
How can being rightly seen translate into love expressed?

“I was told I was loved,” someone once conveyed to me. “My parents said they loved me and that’s why they demanded my full attention. And I believed this was true.” *Do you think this is love?*

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Love

Paul's words in chapter 13 of his first letter to the Corinthians scream out, but so often it seems to we are deaf. Let's ask God to help change that. Listen, hear, and act: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres."

*We may think we know very well what love is until someone asks us:
What is love?*

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Why does the “economy of exchange” reign over that of the “economy of gift” in so many of our churches and relationships? Are we afraid of something? *Yes*. Does a spirit of fear control too much of our lives? *Yes*. Fear sweeps over us like pelting sheets of driving rain and floods our minds and hearts. What we fear therefore becomes the center of who we are. Thoughts?

Break on through, Lord. Let the current of your love transform our hearts and minds so that we might be gracious representatives of Christ in the church and in the world.

Hospitality

It is indeed wonderfully exciting to offer hospitality and shelter in the midst of life's chaos, bewilderment, and uncertainty. Hospitality and home-sharing are deep expressions of Christian spirituality. Amazing that in a world of the fake and counterfeit what's real continues to happen again and again. Lamentably, many today find their identities in the hollow promises of media, consumerism, and making it up as they go along.

Christians have more to offer. We are to invite these precious people into the festive adventure of seeking truth, spiritual direction, meaning and purpose in life, credibility, and authenticity. As we extend hospitality to others, let's be grateful that God hospitably meets us all in a diversity of ways on the journey.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Being in community with God and each other is a joy and a privilege. In seeking to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way, the apostle Paul challenges us Christians to have a deep unity amongst ourselves as we follow Christ, so that we might glorify God with one heart and one voice. To accept one another as brother and sister then, just as Christ has accepted us, will ultimately be pleasing to God, and offer a striking testimony to his love.

Lord, help us to welcome strangers, and to break down any barriers that still haunt us. Keep us open to and aware of the truth that you call and address people from every tribe, every nation, and every tongue. May hospitality overflow from our hearts out into the lonely streets, so that charity abounds to those in need.

Giving Sacrifice

Many Christians today have lost a sense of sacrifice. We must move away from being doped on our culture of gluttony: Money, possessions, and consumerism—and move towards the living God and his love. Getting everything that everyone else does is so ingrained in the fiber of our lives that we have become delirious, shrouded in darkness, and we are losing our way. By contrast, sacrificially giving to others in love and mercy illumines the path, and we begin to understand what it means to follow Christ.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

As we work together doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way, we can participate in reversing the flow of the cultural force of treating others as a means to an end. People are not a means to an end. They are human beings, precious to God and are therefore to be respected, nurtured, and loved.

Do you think it is easier to judge than to love?

We may have heard that God will fulfill all our longings and needs. Do you believe it? I don't, because God is a Creator who has expressly given us each other and a world that are meant to be integral parts of fulfilling these longings and needs. After all, in the Genesis narrative, God says that it's not good for man to be alone. If God had intended to fulfill all our longings and needs, there would have been no reason to say "it is not good....".

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Growing Trust

Sometimes we sense a loss of contact with God. We grope around in darkness longing for light and wander through the wilderness thirsting for a cup of water. When this happens, we need to cling to God, cling to his promises, to the truth that we are not on our own, and to the reality that we have a destiny of being transformed into the image of Christ. Struggling to find the way in the desert is no easy task. God seems distant, yet we know he's there. During these times we plead: *Oh God, offer us cold refreshing cups of water to sustain us, and encourage a growing trust that will provide strength to continue on until we, once more, intimately meet you again.*

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

May our desire for God's substantial healing be greater than our fear of failure. Let's live in the hope of Christ's second coming and not be presently defeated by that which seems insurmountable.

The Bible frequently speaks of hope. What is it?

Breaking through the darkness to the other side and into the glow of light that God provides in Christ is a profound experience of love and grace. As we forge through the difficult times in our own lives, a shadow is always there beckoning us towards the hope of the illuminated path ahead.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Giving Thanks

As the Apostle Paul so eloquently puts it: I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in all speech and knowledge, just as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you - so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(1 Corinthians 1:4-9)

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

The perpetual cycle of sin can diminish in our lives by the grace of God, the revelation of his word, the gift of the Holy Spirit. In our own sanctified and redemptive being and becoming like Christ, there can be a renewal in every present situation—self to God, self to self, self to other, and self to world.

Release us, oh Lord, from the power of sin that chains us in the darkness, and bring us into your liberating light, so that we might live anew for the sake of Jesus.

Being grace-filled is receiving and giving a gift.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Forgiveness: Unconditional or Conditional?

On the basis of the finished work of Christ, God forgives all. That is, God establishes forgiveness unconditionally. Access to God's forgiveness, however, is conditional in that for us it can only be received through our confession of sin and our request that God grant us this forgiveness.

Do you think there should be a connection between forgiveness and forgetting?

Forgiveness is not a mechanism, but an embodied way of life connected to being in community with God. To forgive is to forgive as we've been forgiven. Take a risk—break on through to the other side far away from guilt and condemnation and rejoice in release. Celebrate the reality that our words and deeds are being performed on the stage of the Kingdom of God, which is founded upon and centered in Jesus Christ.

What is forgiveness? Does it refer to release?

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Grace has been misplaced. Everything seems to be focused on negotiation. Surpassing notions of exchange or deal making however, is the directedness of God for our lives.

There are plenty of ungracious attitudes around. We all make mistakes, sin, and are in need of redemption. Thank God for Christ. Embrace grace and then give it away in generosity. God's grace comes to us superabundantly and freely. Let's offer it to others in overflowing joy.

May the power of the Holy Spirit deeply indwell us individually and in community as we follow the missional trajectory of witnessing to the Christ to the ends of the earth. *Radiate the Spirit!*

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

The Holy Spirit is not some vague impersonal force or energy, or a guide without a map merely doing his own thing. In contrast, he is a personal agent whose actions are in harmony with the Father and the Son, and who therefore is a capable and loving guide in that he points us back to them, to the map of Scripture, and how to live as we move towards our destination of imaging Christ. Clearly, the Spirit and the map are to work together. Map reading is not a given, but a challenge which requires growing levels of competence and hearing the Spirit. The Spirit glorifies the risen Christ, acting as his very presence, illuminating the map in accordance with the loving directions that unfold for followers of Christ Jesus.
From *Living Spirituality: Illuminating the Path*

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Remember we're not alone.
As we celebrate Pentecost
each year, we can be thankful
that the Holy Spirit was
poured out and that he guides
and directs our lives as the
presence of Christ with us,
until the end of the age.

*May we be thankful that we have received the gift of the
Holy Spirit. The biblical Holy Spirit is not some
impersonal force or vague natural phenomenon, but the
Spirit of God and of Christ. It is this Spirit who illuminates
the path to life and who will be with us until the end of the
age.*

❧ living in tension ❧

There is a tension between being and doing. Often we are confronted with this question, especially in the West, “What do you do?” The implication is that who we are is based in what we do as work; therefore our identities may be wrapped tightly in our occupations and doings. We are more. Charles Taylor in *Ethics of Authenticity*, 17, expounds on the way that what we do has infiltrated who we are: “*What we need to explain is what is peculiar to our time. It’s not just that people sacrifice their love relationships and the care of their children, to pursue careers. The point is that today many people feel called to do this, feel they ought to do this, feel their lives would be somehow wasted or unfulfilled if they didn’t do it.*” Let us remember what we are called to in this context: To live out spirituality that is consistent with the teachings of Jesus. This living spirituality is rooted in who we are as his followers and then in what we do as a result of this reality.



Feeling sad much of the time can happen to us. Sometimes, in these circumstances, there is a desire to lash out and destroy even the good that may be evident. During these hard periods, we need to remember that God is trustworthy and that we can seek to create and not destroy. Life is lived moment by moment; change and transformation, through the mercy of God, are real possibilities.

Ever been depressed? Why do you think depression is so widespread today?

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

I recently read about a church that became a coffee bar. The pastor confessed that people liked the espressos, frappes, and pastries better than the ministry.

He reckoned that God was telling the church to focus on its strengths – being relevant means giving the people what they want: Coffee drinks and chocolate-filled donuts.

Why are churches turning into coffee houses, apartment buildings, and art museums?

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

To be living on the borders, the edge, brings a variety of questions to mind. Here's one for you:

Where are Christians to situate themselves in a culture gone mad with consumerism?

The folly of “shopping” tears into the very fabric of who we are and seeks to assure us that everything will be okay if we consume. *Shop to our heart's delight* is the evangelistic message for today. Our hope, as some would have it, is in the eternal gift of acquisition. Why, we're even mediatized to devour each other.

And then another question:

Do you find there's a problem with the mission of consumerism and the impact it is having on the church?

Lamentably, the founding stories of our faith are so often entombed in church buildings that lack the presence of God, or in electronic boxes that perpetrate a mindless faith in consumerism. By contrast, the subversive and radical power of the mission, ministry, and person of Jesus illumines the path towards authenticity. Cherish the gospels, read them diligently, appreciate their relation and distinction, and above all, live their truth in love.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Christians devote a tremendous amount of time and energy in attempting to exorcise tension. In my view, this is a utopian misinterpretation of living spirituality and not the direction God has for us. To be in tension is to be in-between. And being in-between corresponds to the theological marker of the Kingdom of God, to life in the world, and to who we are as creatures of God.

As Jesus is now absent and the New Covenant not yet complete, how are we to live in-between lives in the inadequacy of the present?

Lord, help us to give up not praying. As with many addictions that we put false hope in – even though we tend to know that it is false hope and we can't quit and return to it again and again, not praying is tough to stop doing. We ask that we would be released to pray more frequently and fervently. Amen.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Living Perceptively

There's so much deception around. Darkness masquerades as light, lies as truth and the unreal as real. Foreign gods, foreign spirits, and foreign gospels invade and threaten to dismantle the one true gospel, centered in the crucified and risen One. And lamentably, much of this takes place in our churches. In our own day, God, spirit, and gospel can mean anything if they are not carefully defined and their sense and referent traced out with dynamic biblical research and study. Discernment and wisdom are crucial for the Christian life, especially today. *In all things, oh God, please grant us these insights for the sake of the gospel and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

What might emerging spirituality look like for the church?

Living life on earth is
sometimes like being lost
in thick billows of fog.
We see very little of
what's ahead or behind
and feel closed in. As we
are forced to slowly and
carefully inch our way
along, let's hope to learn
more of the deep truth of
trusting the Author of our
world and our salvation.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

The failure of the self contained centered self, the “I” of high modernity, has all too often translated into the entrapped, reduced, de-centered self, the “ZERO” of low postmodernity. While clearing debris away from ourselves is an essential priority and a continual process of same and change, we begin to realize the glaring necessity is to find a “real” self in the midst of the wreckage. Unfortunately, our legitimate fears of being deceived may lead us into further deceptions in an embrace of the “I” or the “ZERO”, though instead our trajectory towards protection is to turn to Christian revelation and faith, which offer us a credible way through to a re-centered and reconstituted self beyond the arrogant “I” or the imprisoned “ZERO”.

Lord God, our hearts are so often cluttered with debris. There's so much rubble that needs to be rearranged and piles of refuse that should be thrown out. Help us start the process of heart transformation and renewal. We sometimes assume that if we just had more time, money, and possessions, or if we looked better, were more talented and wise, the condition of our hearts would improve. This is simply not true. Redeem and cleanse us, Lord God, so that we might more truly seek after you and your kingdom with a renewed and pure heart.

Presumption & Despair

Imaginative presumption or despair plays a massive role in our contexts. Culturally speaking there's a Seinfeld god, an absent god, an image god, a nature god, an internet god, a republican or democrat god, or a powerless god, to mention just a few of the representations of the gods of culture that can lead to despair. More specifically, in Christian circles, we often find an overdose of presumption. Some Christians imagine that they know exactly what God is doing, and that through the Spirit God speaks directly to them. A Christian once told me that he could be perfect in this life because the Spirit had assured him that was the case. Another time a believer insisted that a verse in Isaiah was written explicitly for her. Misleading fictions like these tend to be prominent today, but such presumption has more to do with self-centeredness than it does truly knowing, imaginatively and otherwise, the living God.

*In today's world of Post – Everything, how are you
surviving?*

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Shaming

Tombstones adorn the church inside and out. *Release us, oh God, from this graveyard of tears.* Melody sent me an e-mail asking how to cope with the shaming that goes on in her more traditionally-minded church. Every time she comments about the teaching in her church, she's made to feel sub-human, yet she has excellent points to make. Now experiencing a deep sense of shame in even asking questions, she is suffering scorn from those who are idiotically ignorant concerning her gifts and spiritual starvation. Here's what makes it more difficult: She has nowhere to turn. Family and friends attend this church. Melody thinks she has to stay.

Why do you think there is so much shaming going on in churches?

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Conflict

I like these words from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *What is Life? Written* around 1805. He expresses conflict like this:

Resembles Life what once was held of Light,
Too ample in itself for human sight?
An absolute Self--an element ungrounded--
All, that we see, all colours of all shade
By encroachment of darkness made?--
Is very life by consciousness unbounded?
And all the thoughts, pains, joys of mortal breath,
A war-embrace of wrestling Life and Death?

What's your fragrance?

To those entrusted with the gospel, mission is spreading the fragrance of Christ, both to those being saved and to those who are perishing – the fragrance of life and death.

The aroma of the former is like a scent that gets better and better,
while the scent of the latter is like a stench
that gets worse and worse.

Confidence without humility is arrogance. Humility without confidence is relativism.

Remembering

Many today see the recounting of one's past as a manipulative battle between the victim and the victimizer. While it is not possible to recount total truth because we're situated in space and time, and we perceive things from our own contexts, does this mean that, "I remember," is merely equated with *making it up as I go along*? To call something true about the past in our culture, I think, has become more like creating a stimulating story that entertains, or is used to further certain purposes. Do you think this is the case? Would you say there is any place left today for "I remember..." making a claim to something that is sufficiently true?

From *The Prelude*, Book XIII, 1805
by William Wordsworth

Meanwhile, the Moon look'd down upon this shew
In single glory, and we stood, the mist
Touching our very feet; and from the shore
At a distance not the third part of a mile
Was a blue chasm; a fracture in the vapour,
A deep and gloomy breathing-place through which
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
The universal spectacle throughout
Was shaped for admiration and delight,
Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
Through dark deep thoroughfare had Nature lodg'd
The Soul, the Imagination of the whole.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

What seems a blow to the ego may help us find a better footing to live the life of faith and to trust God. A deflated ego can be a vibrant reminder that God should come first in our lives. When we put God first, we're on our way to being true selves, those who are being transformed into the image of the crucified and risen One.

Living spiritually is enhanced and enriched through the Psalms, and their frequent affirmations of and appeals to God's covenant loyalty. Many of these writings, however, may shock us with their realism. In the midst of our sometimes *automatic pilot* spirituality, where everything is supposedly bright and happy, some of the Psalms remind us that community with God and the path to life are far from straight forward. There is and will be brokenness, mystery, dark times, judgment, desperate searching, and much more. Though these circumstances frequently lead to illumination and new understanding, arriving there means going through—not taking a detour around—facets of spirituality that may not fit our desired schemes, notions, and expectations of God. The path may become difficult and the destination may seem far away, but God is faithful to lead us forward. The Psalms are a richly textured slice of life with God, and they offer us revelatory insights into humanness and living spirituality.

From *Living Spirituality: Illuminating the Path*.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Peddling the Gospel

Cunning words and clever speech have the powerful capacity to divert our attention from what is most central to us—sincere devotion to Christ. Whatever happened to the church proclaiming Christ, instead of a being a parody of cultural consumerism rooted in the art of rhetoric, which aims to give the consumer what they want and to reap the financial windfall connected to it? How much should one have to pay to have the true gospel preached to them?

To receive someone's words is a continual challenge of discernment, and we want to be alert and aware in order to receive with caution and clarity. The discernment of diversion necessitates a fine balance between trust and suspicion. Whom shall we trust? Whom shall we be suspicious of? When preaching Jesus becomes self-centered, when there's a spirit of pride, and when this supposed gospel counters that of the crucified Christ, we know the answer. Peddlers of this gospel, which cannot be the true gospel, will have the end that such actions deserve.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

In Revelation 3:14-22, Christ wishes that the Christians in Laodicea were either hot or cold. It is often assumed that *hot* means “on fire for the Lord” or a full commitment, while *cold* means, “no fire for the Lord,” or no commitment. If this is the case, the question we’re faced with is why Christ would approve of no commitment at all? This doesn’t make sense. *Hot* and *cold* are not to be taken as positive and negative descriptions, but both are positive in regard to what the church’s actions should be. The problem is being lukewarm, which seems to identify all too many churches. We, like the Laodiceans, proclaim we’re rich, but Christ says we’re impoverished. True riches are spiritual, not found in material possessions, but in Christ himself.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Counterfeit forms of spirituality are often characterized by a hyper-subjectivity or hyper-objectivity, which have little or nothing to do with Christian truth or with the whole of life in God's world. It is essential to be aware of the proliferation of these popularized cultural manifestations that are anti-spirituality, and by contrast, to speak and live the truth in love, as we battle against the clutches of death.

*May the grace of the Lord
Jesus Christ be with you.*

Sometimes we experience wilderness wanderings where God seems far, so far away. There is an acute sense of God's absence in our lives and we stumble along as if on our own. *Meet us where we are, oh Lord, and bring us out and into the shelter of your promise that your presence is always with us. Help us to have a renewed trust that your mission to redeem the world includes us.*

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

American Woes

Decline seems to characterize the once great United States of America. Shocking expressions of rampant consumerism and making what one can off someone else's misfortune signal what's really important for many: Profit. The current breakdown of stable relationships and families is creating a culture without a home. Many don't have any idea where they're going or where they've just been. This growing loss of contact with God as home: Providing community, stability, trust, justice, and love means that the real world has less and less impact on living life. Surrounded by the sound bite superficiality of politics and church, there's nowhere left to turn. *Help*. We need to find our way home.

From *The Prelude*, Book V, 1805
by William Wordsworth

Now this is hollow, 'tis a life of lies
From the beginning, and in lies must end
Forth bring him to the air of common
sense,
And, fresh and shewy as it is, the Copse
Slips from us into powder. Vanity
That is his soul, there lives he, and there
moves;
It is the soul of everything he seeks;
That gone, nothing is left which he can
love.

Trust and Suspicion

There is a heavy emphasis on suspicion these days and rightly so. Suspicion is an important element of not being duped; no one wants to be duped. When people get burned once, they swear it will never happen again. This has left trust in a bad way. Trust, I've heard it said, has been maligned, manipulated, and discredited. Suspicion reigns and no one wants to trust anymore. But this is more a part of a grand illusion that it is true.

Why? Suspicion is rooted in trust. That is, trust precedes suspicion and suspicion requires trust. Otherwise, and let's face it, suspicion wouldn't exist and we would just say, "That's the way it is." But we don't. If this is true, it leads to several conclusions: First, human beings cannot escape trust. Second, the world we live in is a world that requires and gets trust. Third, God as Creator and Redeemer calls us to be suspicious of certain claims, people, and things, while trusting in others. And learning what to be suspicious of and what to trust is a life-long task of seeking to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

From *The Prelude*, Book VI, 1805
by William Wordsworth

In living Nature, I had there a guide
Which open'd frequently my eyes, else shut,
A standard which was usefully applied,
Even when unconsciously, to other things
Which less I understood. In general terms,
I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
Misled as to these latter, not alone
By common inexperience of youth
But by the trade in classic niceties,
Delusion to young Scholars incident
And old ones also, by that overpriz'd
And dangerous craft of picking phrases out
From languages that want the living voice
To make of them a nature to the heart,
To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
What reason, what simplicity and sense.



In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, many Christians have moved in one of two directions: Embracing absolute arrogance or absolute humility. To be sure, both these expressions, in this form, are problematic. It is thoroughly bewildering that some Christians hold onto the ridiculous notion that they're right about everything, or that no one else is right about anything.

A better configuration would be something like this: Confidence without humility is arrogance and humility without confidence is relativism. These two are in tensional dialogue, disallowing any absolute form of one, or the other. Living spirituality is tethered to dialogue, and dialogue shatters these monologues of false absolutes.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Scripture deeply searches for ways to express the greatness of God, but words are unable to capture God's magnificent power and complexity. While words are significant and meaningful, God transcends and surpasses anything that could ever be said in words. The fullness of the mystery of God, however, has been revealed in Christ, yet the complete reality of Christ is known to only the personal divine being of God.

Tenacious obscurity sometimes plagues us and we're unable to see as clearly as we would like. Groping around for illumination saturates our thoughts and feelings, and there are no easy answers. We fear being excluded, alienated, and lost. Yet, living and working through the shadow of time is continually a challenge to find the light and to embrace it as we are able.

May the eyes of our hearts be illuminated, as we seek to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

God has empowered us through his grace,
through the gift of righteousness, and through
a union with Christ to live in a new ways.
This recognition carries with it a new
allegiance, not to sin, but to God. It is this
power that operates in living spirituality and
enables us to live life toward God.

The enactment of this transfer of lordship is
working its way to completion in our lives
now, even in a moment-by-moment way. Just
because it will only be complete in the future
does not mean it is irrelevant or insignificant
for living our present lives. We are *alive* to
God in Christ.

From *The Prelude*, Book XI, 1805
by William Wordsworth

What then remained in such eclipse? what light
To guide or cheer? The laws of things which lie
Beyond the reach of human will or power;
The life of nature, by the God of love
Inspired, celestial presence ever pure;
These left, the Soul of Youth must needs be rich,
Whatever else be lost, and these were mine,
Not a deaf echo, merely, of thought
Bewilder'd recollections, solitary,
But living sounds.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Christ is Lord of all of life now, and together we are part of God's unfolding drama of his mission to humanity and the world. May God help us to be living in the light of the return of Christ as it relates to present expectation and action towards social, political, and ethical change; for we await a redeemer who is renewing and will renew all things. Therefore, in the apostle Paul's terms, we are not to be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we might discern God's will and offer ourselves as living sacrifices in doing it.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

In a startling passage in Revelation 1:8, using the Greek alphabet, God now refers to himself with the first and last letters. He is the beginning and the end. No power is greater than his power. In spite of the difficult circumstances and devastating persecution, the Almighty himself professes his ultimate sovereign control of the end of history. This magnificent and reassuring title, Alpha and Omega, occurs ten times in the New Testament, and four of these references are in the Apocalypse.

We are in a *triumphal procession* and let's be grateful for the polyvalence of the imagery in 2 Corinthians 2:14. It stands for, I believe, both victory and humiliation, which are both part of the gospel mission and ministry. Humiliations can abound and result in rejection, yet God in Christ accepts us, and this leads us on to victory.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

From *Tintern Abbey*, 1798
by William Wordsworth

... I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That hath no need of remoter charm,
By thought supplies, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. – That time is past,
And all its aching joys are no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, no mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity ...



Praise God for who
he is and for what he
has done, is doing
and will do - for his
mission through
creation, Israel and
the Christ to renew
and redeem humanity
and the world.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

Living Story

No one's story is fully written in the *now*. Don't get caught up in the eternal return of the present with the living dead. As children of God we're travelling on the journey to our destiny, which is to image Christ. If movement and transformation are not part of your theology, change it. Hope deserves—as does rapturous love—a startling embrace that enlivens our notion of being on the way in living our unfinished story.

From *The Prelude*, Book XII, 1805
by William Wordsworth

This is for the past, and things that may be view'd
Or fancied, in the obscurities of time.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

We should neither be reading every event on the world's stage as end time's prophecy, nor should we be naïve. Interpreting the times calls for Christians to have minds of wisdom and hearts of patient endurance. We can continue to trust in both God's faithful working out of his purposes and the victory that believers already participate in because of the blood of the Lamb.

Throne theophanies in Scripture are visions of God enthroned. God is holy, almighty, and who was, is, and is to come. He lives forever and ever. He is worthy for he has created all things. Revelation 5 captures one of these awesome scenes. In this majestic scene there is assurance that those facing dire circumstances and life-threatening persecution can trust God. In a world that may seem to be out of control, in a world of suffering and death, God is there, moving history to its cataclysmic consummation.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

From *The Prelude*, Book I, 1805
by William Wordsworth

Sometimes it suits me better to shape out
Some Tale from my own heart, more near akin
To my own passions and habitual thoughts,
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, with interchange of gentler things.
But deadening admonitions will succeed
And the whole beauteous Fabric seems to lack
Foundation, and, withal, appears throughout
Shadowy and unsubstantial. Then, last wish,
My last and favorite aspiration! then
I yearn towards some philosophic Song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;
But from this awful burthen I full soon
Take refuge, and beguile myself with trust
That mellow years will bring riper mind
And cleared insight. Thus from day to day
I live, a mockery of the brotherhood
Of vice and virtue, with no skill to part
Vague longing that is bred by want of power
From paramount impulse not be withstood,
A timorous capacity from prudence;
From circumspection, infinite delay.

Living Spiritual Rhythms For Today

God is the mystery of the world. What a wonder that we have in Scripture and nature the knowledge of God that we do. Praise God today for the gracious revelation that has been given to us, and may we act on what we have, as we await the fullness of the future.

We are not to be just sitting around waiting for the lordship of Christ to come. Christ is Lord of all of life now, and together we are part of God's unfolding drama of a mission to humanity and the world. Hope and longing for justice are piercings that identify us. May God help us to be living in the light of the return of Christ as it relates to present expectation and action towards social, political, and ethical change, for we await a redeemer who will renew all things.

