

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, February 10, 2021. Thank you so much for tuning in, and for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

For today's devotion, to wrap up this mini-series on the prayers of the ancients, I am so excited to share with you one of my favorite prayers from one of my favorite ancient theologians, Julian of Norwich. Julian was an ancient English mystic who is famous for her book *Revelations of Divine Love*, which is soul-filling and incredible. She received the visions, or revelations, of God and God's love while incredibly ill, she literally thought she was going to die of what may have been the plague, and God powerfully showed up for her in that experience to give her these divine revelations of love. Also, fun fact, that book is the first book written in the English language by a female author, in the late 14th century. This is a huge fun fact for many reasons we don't have time to dive into today, but suffice it to say that her work is powerful on a number of levels.

Julian chose to live a secluded life as an anchoress, cut off from secular life to focus her whole being on God, the sacraments, and prayer. She was also sick a lot of the time (the Black Death plague was also happening at this time), so she was no stranger to many of the struggles we are facing these days - isolation and pandemic, to name just a few. Her words speak so wonderfully to the powerful love that overcomes any ill that we face, anything that threatens to separate us from God, and I believe her wisdom, her mystic knowing of God, provides so much for us, especially today.

So please join with me as we pray these words from Julian of Norwich:

*In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss. In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing, for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen.*

And our scripture reading today comes from Romans 8:31-35, 37-39:

*What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

I cannot tell you how many times I have needed the assurances and words the Julian wrote about God in her prayer. When it feels like the world in front of us is too much, that we just can't handle one more thing, our hearts, minds, spirits, and bodies just do not have anything left to give, it's unbelievably difficult to move through that heaviness and back into life itself. The wonder of God is that truly nothing, no earthly thing, no threat, no demonic forces or power of sin or death, will ever be more powerful than the love God has for each and every one of us. Our worth, our very being comes from God's deep love for us as human, beloved children, and God walks alongside us in every way we need throughout our lives.

What feels so powerful about Julian's prayer is that she highlights God's love as these everyday, come alongside us things and roles and people that we may overlook or take for granted sometimes, but are actually the blessings and gifts that make up the fabric of a beautiful human life. God is our mother, brother, savior. In Christ we are restored and saved and find rest. Bliss of being human is what God is to us. And God's love wraps around us like clothing, embracing us in our bodies as well as our spirits and minds, just as we are, in every part of what it is to be human. And Paul proclaims the Word of Truth for us today: nothing in all of creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

So, dear friends, whatever might ail you these days, whatever battles you're fighting or exhaustion you're carrying, or deep sadness that overshadows you, in the hope provided for us by Jesus Christ our Lord, I pray that you will know the deep truth of love. And that in God's love, in this created world, truly all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen.

Please join me in praying Julian's words again:

*In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss. In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing, for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen.*

One last note before we wrap up for today - these devotions will look a little different through the holy season of Lent, beginning next Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17. The devotions will be shorter, and we will be part of a larger, synod-wide worshipping community in the evenings on Zoom at 7pm. Stay tuned to our website and Facebook page for more details, and I look forward to being on the journey of Lent with you all.

Have a beautiful rest of your day, dear friends, God is with you and loves you deeply. Amen.