

40 Days

with

Jesus

A READING PLAN FOR LENT

Day 1

FEBRUARY 22

Evidence: So that we might be certain of our faith in Christ

Scripture: Luke 1:1-4

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught

Reflection

“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so!” These are the beginning words to one of the most famous Christian songs in history. It is a statement that is deeply personal and this recognition of Christ’s love for us is affirmed by the testimony of Scripture. We are claiming that we know Christ’s love because we find it in Scripture.

In a similar way, we begin our journey through Luke by looking at his introduction. Luke wrote this gospel with the purpose of providing an accurate account of the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that Theophilus might know with certainty what he had been taught regarding the Christian faith. We can have a certainty, an assurance regarding what we believe about Jesus. Our faith does not have to be wishful thinking or a figment of our imagination. It can be rooted in certainty. Luke provides us that sense of certainty through this introduction. As much as this is an assurance for Theophilus, it is also an assurance for us. We can have certainty of faith by following the life of Jesus.

Reflection Questions

What Scripture passage about Jesus gives you a sense of certainty about your faith?

What can you do to be better equipped and informed on how to find certainty of faith through Scripture?

Day 2

Sacrifice: So that he might give up his life for us

Scripture: Luke 2:11-12

11 "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Reflection

"Away in a manger no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head." As we sing such a Christmas hymn every year, we might think of a wooden feeding trough with sweet smelling golden hay. Yet, the mangers or troughs of 1st century Ancient Israel was made of stone. In the image, we find a type of stone manger that is located along a stone wall. It would look similar to carved out graves in caves that were also common for burial. We know that Jesus was buried in a cave. Luke writes that the shepherds would see a sign. This is a double sign. It first serves as a sign to reveal Jesus in his infancy to tell the shepherds, "This is the one. Don't mistake him from any other baby born!" It also serves as a sign to reveal Jesus' destiny to one day be laid into a stone tomb, wrapped in white cloths.

From the beginning, Jesus was born with the destiny to sacrifice his life and give it up for us so that we might have life in him, and life abundantly. Jesus came to suffer and die in our place that we might find the eternal security of God's love and forgiveness. Jesus became a sacrifice on our behalf, so that we might live in the results: forgiveness and restoration. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make that Jesus came with a mission to give up his life for us so that we might find our lives in him?

In what ways are you thankful that Jesus gave his life up for you?

Who are some people you know that you wish could know that Jesus gave his life up for them?

Day 3

Salvation: So that he might be our Savior

Scripture: Luke 2:21

21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Reflection

The name Jesus, is from the Greek word “Iésous,” and it is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name: “Yehoshua,” which means Yahweh saves. In ancient times, parents gave names that would set the course of the child’s life. Name and identity were nearly synonymous. Identity and action were also directly related. Jesus was given a name, which he would live into. He would be our Savior. He would save us from our sins. He saved us, not only by dying on the cross for the payment of our sins, but by living the life that we could not live on our own power. He taught how to love by demonstrating grace and mercy.

Jesus is also savior because he is healer. “Save” and “heal” are the same word in Greek. Jesus came to save. That means Jesus also came to heal. As we look at the ministry of Jesus, we will see the many different ways that Jesus healed people. Healing took place physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially. Jesus also wants to heal you. Jesus wants to save you.

Reflection Questions

What is your name and how does it connect with who you are today?

What difference does it make to you that the Son of God had the name, Jesus?

In what ways do you need Jesus to save or heal you?

Day 4

Revelation: So that we might know the Heavenly Father

Scripture: Luke 2:49-50

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Reflection

When Jesus was twelve years old, he went to Jerusalem with his parents: Mary and Joseph. They went to observe the Passover. After the festival, they began the long journey home with others from their village of Nazareth. After a day of travel, they noticed that Jesus was not with them. Usually groups traveled in caravans divided into groups of men and groups of women and children. As Jesus was a twelve year old male, he was at the in-between age where he could be in either group. Mary and Joseph being in different groups probably assumed that Jesus was with the other group. They raced back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. After an entire day, they found him in the Temple. When Mary scolded Jesus, he responded by saying, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Luke explains that both Mary and Joseph did not understand what he was saying.

Jesus had a mission to reveal that he was God's son. The one name of God that Jesus reveals is: Father. Prior to Jesus' ministry the idea of God as intimate and loving Father was not known and understood by the Israelites. Later, Jesus prays to God before his arrest and says, "I have made your name known to them" (John 17:26). Jesus came to reveal God's heart as a loving father.

Reflection Questions

What kind of a father does Jesus reveal God to be? Why does it matter?

What is most important about God having an endearing parental love for us?

Day 5

FEBRUARY 26

Greater: So that we could surrender and worship Jesus

Scripture: Luke 3:15-16

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Reflection

John the Baptist was great and brought a boldness, fervor, and purity to God's message that had not been seen before. The revelation of God had been silent for centuries. We could imagine the excitement and wonder people had as they encountered John, a compelling and inspiring person. Yet, as great as John was, he was not the awaited Messiah, the one all Israel had been waiting for. John declared that Jesus was far greater and far more glorious.

There are people in our lives who seem to stand out because they inspire us, compel us, and they set for us an example in every way of who we want to be. Yet, as great as they are they are, Jesus is incomparably greater. The good things in our lives are worthy of our attention, time, and energy. We will sacrifice for these things because they are worthy. Yet, Jesus is even more worthy. Jesus came to reveal to us that he is greater and more worthy of our attention than any other "good thing" in our lives.

Reflection Questions

If we are to worship Jesus, why does it matter that he is greater than every good thing in our lives?

In what ways is Jesus greater than the positive things in your life?

Day 6

Belovedness: So that Jesus can show us how to win our battles

Scripture: Luke 3:21-22

21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Reflection

Belovedness is key to our victory. Baptism marks the beginning of our Christian ministry as it marked the beginning of Jesus' entrance into his ministry. Before Jesus did any work of ministry. Before he taught Scripture, preached a sermon, or performed a miracle, he was declared loved by God. God's love does not come as a result of our performance. God's love comes prior to anything we ever do. It is at baptism that Jesus hears, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." God loves Jesus and is pleased with Jesus. God loves you and is pleased with you. This is not on the basis of your performance, but on the basis of your identity as a child of God. We find this to be true because in our baptism, we declare that we

As a result, we can fight our battles like Jesus did. Right after his baptism, Jesus enters the wilderness in order that he could fast for forty days. During that time, he faces temptation from the devil. The next time Jesus hears that he is the beloved son of God is shortly before he is arrested, suffers, and takes the cross for us. When we know that we are beloved children of God, we can find the assurance to face our battles in life. Therefore, whenever you face battles in life, hear the Holy Spirit revealing your identity as a beloved child of God.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to you that you are not just a child of God, but a beloved child of God?

How does God's love help you win your battles?

Day 7

Tempted: So that Jesus might know our human frailty

Scripture: Luke 4:1-2

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

Reflection

Our God is familiar with our weakness, our frailty, and the temptations we face. God came to us in our human flesh and intimately came to know human frailty. He experienced the things that draw our attention, that cause us to trip up and fall. He experienced the things that make us look to people, places, and things other than God in hopes that we might somehow find fulfillment. In the midst of this, he had great compassion. He himself faced our greatest fears and challenges. Jesus knows. Jesus knows. He knows what keeps us up at night. He knows the ways we try to make things work. He knows our weakness through and through. This is what draws us to our Savior. Jesus is not one who is unfamiliar with our lives. Yet, in all of our shortcomings, failures, and rebellions, Jesus chooses to love us, embrace us, forgive us, heal us, and save us. What kind of God is this?

Jesus is a compassionate, loving God who knows our temptations well. When we have experienced the true goodness and compassion of God, we can immediately turn to God in the midst of our troubles and temptations. We can run to him, find strength, assurance, and forgiveness. We can experience his compassion and love and extend it to others.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to you that Jesus has experienced temptation fully?

Why does it matter that Jesus has compassion on you?

In what way can you extend Christ's compassion to someone?

Day 8

Word: So that we might live spiritually, not just physically

Scripture: Luke 4:3-4

3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

Reflection

Spiritual life. This aspect of our lives is often missing in the conversation of our lives. We are quick to talk about our physical health, our emotional health, and our mental health. We often build our lives around those measures. What about spiritual life? Did you know that the ancient Jews did not have a term "spiritual life?" This is because all life was spiritual. All life is spiritual. Let's dwell on that today. Spiritual life is not an aspect to our lives. Spiritual life is everything, and all of the others things are aspects of our spiritual life! In reality, we are spiritual beings that exists in body, mind, and emotions.

When Jesus was tempted to change the stones into bread, Jesus responded that people should not live on bread alone. In other words, what does it matter if healthy our bodies, but our spirit is not nourished? Jesus knew that his existence was not only in the body, but was intimately connected with God. Jesus overcame this temptation of the devil so that we might learn how vital it is to make our spiritual living the most front and center part of our lives. The day comes sooner or later that we face the passing of our bodies, but the spirit lives forever. So, let us go deep in our spiritual living.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to you that you are a spiritual being that exists in body, mind, and emotions?

What can you do to cultivate your faith life?

What can you do increase spiritual engagement so that you could build a life of faith?

Day 9

Worship: So that we might worship God alone

Scripture: Luke 4:5-8

5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Reflection

Jesus came to show us that we ought to worship God alone. In the face of compromise and the lure to worship something other than God, Jesus recalled the Scripture that says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only." The word "worship" conveys that idea of "worthy-ship." We give our attention, time, energy, and in a sense "bow down" to things that we worship. Oftentimes, people think that in response, we ought to just sit in a sanctuary somewhere in constant, ceaseless singing, praying, and meditating on Scripture. However, when we look at the life of Jesus, that is hardly the case. Jesus did spend time in the Temple and the synagogues. Yet, Jesus saw ministry, relationships, eating, and healing people as various forms of worship. The point is that Jesus gave God all the credit and recognized and honored God in the midst of all that he did. Whether he was worshipping at the Temple, interacting with other religious leaders, or he was eating at a "sinners" house, he honored God alone as the one whom we should give recognition.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to you that the worship we do is not only about attending worship services, but also about how we live out every facet of our life?

What is one thing you can do to recognition and honor God more in your life?

Day 10

Trust: So that we might trust in God alone

Scripture: Luke 4:9-11

9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Reflection

We are called to trust God alone and not in the things that fade away in this life. To be clear, this is not a call to deny the good things in our lives, or to deny that there are trustworthy people in our lives. This is a call to recognize that God alone can be infinitely trustworthy.

As I raise my children, I find that where there is trust, the relationship I have with my children becomes so much stronger. How do my children come to trust me? It is because as their father, I consistently show up, love and care for each of them, and they get to experience grace, especially in the midst of their struggles and even failures. In that experience of consistent loving presence in their life, trust is established.

In a similar way, Jesus came to reveal to us that God is trustworthy. Jesus is the evidence that God shows up, loves and cares for us and gives us grace continually no matter what we are facing in life. We can rely on God to be there. We do not need to test if this is true because God always proves Godself to be present and moving amongst us. When we fall, we can trust that God will catch us.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to you that Jesus is the evidence that God keeps showing up with love and care in our lives?

What can you do to share this aspect of Jesus with someone?

Day 11

March 5

Power: So that we might minister in his power

Scripture: Luke 4:14-15

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

Reflection

Every Christian is called into ministry through the covenant of baptism. Ministry is not the work of a particular group of people in the church, but all of God's people are vital ministers in the ministry of the church. The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Therefore, every ministry that we do through the church, and through our own lives ought to be for the purpose of helping people discover faith in Christ, to become a Christ follower, and to be involved in transforming the world to look more and more like our generous and gracious God. How do we do that when the culture of the world often looks different? We need the power of God to work in us.

The good news is that Jesus also needed the power of God, and he did receive the power of God through his baptism. With his time fasting for forty days in the wilderness, he learned how to depend on that power of God. When he returned to Galilee, he was not only filled with the Holy Spirit, he knew how to live depending on the power of the Holy Spirit. The same goes for us. We each have the Holy Spirit living in us. The question is how much we lean into and depend on the Holy Spirit's power. The end goal is so that we might do ministry in that power and people might come to praise Christ. Let's dig deep and lean into the Holy Spirit who already dwells in us. By the Holy Spirit's power, let's love, serve, and give of ourselves to the ministry of the church.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to you that the Holy Spirit dwells in you?

In what ways do you need God's power as you minister to others?

Day 12

Fulfillment: So that we might join him in the good news

Scripture: Luke 4:16-21

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Reflection

The Israelites were waiting for their Messiah. Jesus entered a synagogue in his hometown and read a Scripture from the prophet Isaiah that talked about the Messiah. He then boldly proclaimed, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." The good news that we proclaim is one that has already been accomplished. We do not speak of a hope that is yet to be realized. We speak of Christ who came and fulfilled all the expectations of the Messiah and became our Savior. That is why it is good news. The news always talks about what has happened. Well, our Savior came and became the fulfillment of all that we are waiting for. That's good news! Our job is not to manufacture a message of wishful thinking. Our job is to join a movement of faith in the One who has already made salvation possible. Our job is to invite people to that wondrous good news!

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to know that Christ has already fulfilled everything required for salvation?

Day 13

Authority: So that the works of the evil one can be destroyed

Scripture: Luke 4:31-37

31 Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. 32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 "Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

35 "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!" 37 And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

Reflection

Jesus has authority over evil and darkness in this world. When we live life long enough, it does not take too much to witness evil in this world. They might manifest in forms of war, oppression, slavery, and hate crimes. They can manifest in thoughts of condemnation, loneliness, abandonment, and fear. Evil and darkness can also be seen when we wrestle with guilt or shame. The good news is that in the presence of Jesus, every power of darkness trembles and obeys. This is because Jesus is the Light of the World.

As simple as it is to turn a light switch on for a dark room to be illuminated, we can also speak the name of Jesus. We can have the assurance that just as a man influenced by a demon was healed so powerfully, our lives can also experience the amazing authority and power of Christ. Our Savior is Lord over all powers in this world.

Reflection Questions

In what ways do you need the authority of Jesus Christ to speak victory and healing in your life?

Day 14

Healing: So that we might be made whole

Scripture: Luke 4:38-40

38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. 39 So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. 40 At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Reflection

A story of healing can inspire others to seek healing. I have been in numerous situations in which people have been healed miraculously as a result of prayer. At the same time, I have been in numerous situations in which God has yet to reveal the answer to prayer. What we do know is that when Jesus was face to face with people, the magnitude of his healing power was revealed. Everyone was healed. They were healed of various kinds of sickness. I need to grow in my faith and experience of that measure of reality. In the meantime, I keep looking to Christ to show up and move mightily.

I am learning that the good news is that Jesus never healed the exact same way every single time. Each case was different. Jesus healed every time. Jesus did not heal only their physical ailments. He even brought social and religious/spiritual wholeness. He also brought mental wholeness. We can turn to Christ in every circumstance and seek his healing. Will he heal you the same way he healed another person? It is possible, but also very possible not. The ultimate good news is that in the end, we all will be made whole in our entirety of being. One day, when we stand face to face with Christ, his healing power will shine brightly and bring complete wholeness to us all.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to know that Christ healed many different kinds of illnesses?

In what ways do you need healing and wholeness in your life?

Day 15

Devotion: So that we might have solitary moments with God

Scripture: Luke 4:42

42 At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.

Reflection

I did not grow up “time outs” as a consequence. However, when I became a parent, “time outs” became a trend for parents to do instead of scolding. At first, I did not understand it. It seemed like a punishment of sort (which often is viewed that way!), but as I thought of it differently, I realized it gave my children space to sort out their thoughts and get themselves together.

Alone time. We all need it. We need it in varying degrees. Some people need it in greater amounts than others. Sometimes we need it more than other days. The important thing is that all of us need our solitary moments with God. One of the gifts Jesus brings to us is the permission to take time away from everything and to be in the presence of God. Something important to note is that Jesus did this even when he was incredibly busy. Even when people are crying for his attention. Jesus took time away from it all so that he can be in the presence of his Father. There, he found strength, rejuvenation of capacity, renewal of purpose, and would then return to his ministry.

What are you doing to make sure you have time to yourself? In that space, how are you practicing self-reflection, having a conversation with God, and discovering more about who you are and how you are living in this world. When we frame our lives in our relationship with God, we find ourselves living with greater focus, clarity, and energy. Therefore, let’s find time for solitary moments to be in the presence of God.

Reflection Questions

Why is it important to you that you have alone time with God?

In what ways do you need God to speak to you in an alone time with God?

Day 16

Healing: So that we might be made whole

Scripture: Luke 4:42-44

42 At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Reflection

So often in life, we do not know the way to turn. We are presented with two choices, sometimes three. Other times there are so many options that we do not know what to do. Very often it may appear that every option has great value. We need to know which way is the way God would call us to go. We need to go where Jesus goes. Wherever he is, we will know for sure that such a place is direction God would have us go. Yet, how do we know that? We need to be rooted and immersed into Scripture. We need to ask for discernment. We need to ask for wisdom.

One of the things for sure is that God draws us to the spaces and places of life in which God can enable us to represent the goodness of God's kingdom. When we can see God's presence at work, we can be sure that it is in line with God's purpose. However, that is not the only criteria. Sometimes, even in the midst of great and wonderful things happening, God might call us into new places for the purpose of more people hearing the good news of Jesus Christ through our lives. God is ever expanding, and ever invitational. He is calling us to consider how we discern. Let us discern according to God's purpose for salvation and reaching new people with God's love.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to know that discernment is about God's purpose for how he will reach new people through you?

Who are people in your life that God might be using you to reach with God's love?

Day 17

March 12

Calling: So that our ordinary work might be holy

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,[a] the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Reflection

When Jesus calls us, he gives us a calling that turns our ordinary work into holy work. A calling from God does not automatically equate to becoming a professional minister or a missionary. It is a calling to see our lives as a ministry. God has given each of us gifts to use for the advancement of God's goodness and grace. God's goodness and grace must materialize not only in the boundaries of the church, but throughout the world. The greatest missionaries are not the ordained or the licensed or the commissioned people sent out into local and global communities of faith. The greatest are those who live the day to day life in spaces of work, rest, and play and finding ways to share the goodness and grace of God with the community and people around them.

Reflection Questions

In what ways is God calling you to holy work in the midst of your daily "ordinary" work?

Day 18

Willing: So that we might know God's willing heart for healing

Scripture: Luke 5:12-13

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Reflection

During times of crisis, tragedy, and illness, it is easy to wonder whether God hears us. Scripture reveals to us the heart of God. A man puts the condition in his faith statement saying, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Here we see the man recognizing Jesus' ability. He says, "You can make me clean." But he questions whether Jesus is willing. To this, Jesus answers, "I am willing." The word "willing," is a word that is best portrayed as eagerness as though one is sitting at the edge of one's seat, waiting for the opportunity. Jesus reveals that God's heart is a willingness in which God looks for the opportunity to bring healing to us.

This is important because it can help us do away with doubt on whether God has a heart of healing. God indeed does. God desires to heal and make whole. When we can have such faith, it emboldens us in prayer and causes us to increase in our faith. Much like this picture, sometimes our faith is like vision occluded by objects that stand in the way of light. Yet, light finds its way to us. In the same way, doubt might occlude our faith, but we can know that healing grace comes to us for God is indeed willing. Let us therefore believe in the willingness of God. Today, go to God with all of your desires needs for healing and know that God hears you and is to do the work of healing in your life.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to know that Jesus is willing to heal?

What is your healing story?

Day 19

Forgiveness: So that we might be free from guilt

Scripture: Luke 5:17-26

17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. 19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. 20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." 21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Reflection

Guilt unravels us and causes us to live in brokenness and shame. Guilt can be the passageway to self-condemnation. Guilt causes us to project our negative emotions towards others. This is because God did not create us for guilt. God created us for wholeness and freedom. Jesus came to forgive us for our sins. This is a kind of forgiveness that not only pardons us from punishment, but brings healing and wholeness to our lives. In Christ's forgiveness, there is mending, a stitching that happens. We are made whole again. Let us grab ahold of his great forgiveness, and find ourselves healed and whole.

Reflection Questions

In what ways have you experienced the forgiveness of Christ?

How has Christ's forgiveness made you more whole?

Day 20

Inclusion: So that we might be with those who are excluded

Scripture: Luke 5:27-32

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. 29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Reflection

Inclusion is the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ. From the beginning, the arrival of God's Son into this world is a message that God has come to restore those who have become lost and pushed out of the religious system of the day. Jesus' mission clearly reveals that those who were outcasted were brought in, those who were excluded became included. It did not matter what the situation was, Jesus sought after those who had become excluded. This should be the expression of any Christ-centered, truly biblical ministry or church.

On Facebook, I found an image that read: "This year I want to be more like Jesus: hang out with sinners, upset religious people, tell stories that make people think, choose unpopular friends, be kind, loving, and merciful, and take naps on boats. Sounds like Jesus to me. We can all do a little more of that in our lives. When we do, we begin to embody how Jesus lived and served God's kingdom work.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to know that being faithful to Christ and his teaching is to be inclusive?

What experience do you have of being included?

Day 21

Liberation: To be free from the burden of the Law

Scripture: Luke 6:1-5

1 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 3 Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 5 Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Reflection

In first century Ancient Israel, the most common interpretation of the Jewish Law was to live by the letter of the Law and not to sway from it. This created an impossible situation in which every act was cause for acceptance or rejection from religious life. Religion was not an optional part of life that people chose like in our present day American culture. Religion was the fabric woven into everyday life for a Jewish person. Some cases found religious leaders scrutinizing the rules to extreme measure. For example, on the command to tithe (give 10%) one's earnings, some religious leaders believed that even a tenth of what someone had in their spice rack should be given to God. To that letter of the Law, Jewish leaders accused Jesus of picking grain to eat on the Sabbath day.

Jesus responded by explaining to the religious leaders about the proper context for the Law, and even reminded them about the revered King David who out of hunger once ate from the consecrated bread. Jesus came to set us free from the burden of living by the letter of the Law. He did this by fulfilling the Jewish Law and applying that fulfillment in our lives. We have been set free from the law of sin and death. We can focus on living in the freedom of God's life.

Reflection Questions

Why is it important to you that the demands of the Jewish Law have been fulfilled and we have been set free from its obligations?

In what ways does your freedom enable to "better obey" the Law?

Day 22

Rest: To know invoke grace and favor

Scripture: Luke 6:6-11

6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there. 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" 10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Reflection

The purpose of the Sabbath (day of rest) was to do good. It was not meant to restrict and to bring greater measure of condemnation, judgment, or destruction. The Sabbath was meant to restore people to God and for people to find rest in their faith. The Sabbath is not the goal. The Sabbath is the vehicle or the means to restoration, experiencing grace, and becoming renewed in our whole being. Rest finds favor. Rest causes us to let go of trying to "make life work." Rest invokes faith because as we rest we need to trust that all will be well in this world, and in my own life. The rest of the Jewish Law is the same.

The Law was not meant to be the goal. It was a means to drive us to the grace and favor of God. Jesus teaches that the purpose was to do good and to save life. In the same way, we are set free from the condemnation of the Law. When we are set free, we can live more fully. The man with the shriveled hand was healed and became able to be, to do, and to live again. The Law might have caused us to become "shriveled" in our capacity to live with joy and wonder. However, when we rest our faith in Christ, we became enabled to live with joy and wonder again.

Reflection Questions

In what ways have you discovered that resting invokes the grace of God?

Day 23

March 19

Demonstration: So that we might have proof of his teaching

Scripture: Luke 6:17-19

17 He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, 19 and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Reflection

Jesus was the master of experiential teaching. He did not just sit with his disciples to share information and interpretation regarding the Jewish Law and how people should live their religious and social lives. Jesus demonstrated the power and wonder of God's kingdom. Jesus' authority and teaching was validated by demonstration. When Jesus spoke of God's kingdom and God's promises of restoration, he showed it through a demonstration of healing. In fact, Jesus often performed a miracle prior to a teaching. His teaching often became an explanation of a miracle that had materialized before people's eyes.

These miracles of healing were not small and sporadic. The miracles were not limited to physical healing, but included spiritual, mental, and emotional healing as well. The gospel of Luke describes the immensity of Jesus' healing ministry. Crowds were gathered. They had come from all of the surrounding regions to hear him and be healed. What about you? Are you seeking Jesus so that you can hear him and be healed? Jesus invites you to join him, to receive from him teaching that is made true by the demonstration of his power and presence. I have found that when I hear testimonies of healing, the teaching of Jesus comes quicker into my heart. Testimonies of healing validate the teaching of Christ. We all have some pain or ailment. Our Jesus can heal us all. Therefore, let's go before Jesus with the yearning to hear him and be healed.

Reflection Questions

What is your healing story? How does your healing story reveal the teaching of Jesus?

Day 24

Faith: That we might believe in Christ's authority

Scripture: Luke 7:1-9

1 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6 So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

Reflection

Faith is more than a matter of believing that God exists. It is an active trust in the goodness of God. It is a conviction that God's goodness will ultimately reign over all the evil in this world. Jesus came to reveal this to us. Many folks were caught up in trying to prove themselves to God. This is because the religious system of the time was built on personal holiness and obedience before God. There were rules to follow and regulations to keep. Some expressions of Jewish faith took extreme measures to "split hairs" over how exactly people should apply obedience to the Jewish Law in their lives. We can see evidence of that in our own legal system today because laws can become very precise and specific. Any liability form will reveal the intricacies of obeying laws! Jesus however came to draw our attention to living by faith, and faith in God's goodness. Let us join the centurion who believed so firmly that Jesus' authority was good and truly above all troubles. Let us discover that through him, we can witness the reign of God more fully in our lives.

Reflection Questions When have you observed God's authority as goodness?

Day 25

Resurrection: To know his power over life and death

Scripture: Luke 7:11-17

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” 14 Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” 17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

Reflection

Jesus is Lord over life and death. In him, we see demonstrated this great power and authority. Yet, this story of speaking life and raising the young man from the dead is only a glimpse of the true power that would be released and exhibited on resurrection Sunday. The Sunday after his crucifixion, the earth would shake, the stone would roll away, and out from the grave would rise Jesus, our Lord and Savior. His resurrection would be different. This young man would be raised from the dead only to die a natural death at some point later. But the resurrection of Christ would bring forth a forever victory over death once and for all. When we put our faith in Christ, we are given such an assurance and victory. As Christians, when we speak of resurrection, we are not talking about a resuscitation or a restoration of the former life. We speak of a new life, a new creation, and a new way of being. Resurrection is a glorious reality that we share in Christ. Therefore, in him, there is truly no more death. When we think of Jesus raising the dead, let us look further and deeper into what it truly points to: his own resurrection, that resurrects all of us on that great one day.

Reflection Questions

Why does it matter that Jesus doesn’t just raise us from the dead, but resurrects us from the dead?

How does resurrection change everything for you?

Day 26

Proof: That we might know who Jesus is

Scripture: Luke 7:18-23

18 John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" 20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" 21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 23 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Reflection

John the Baptist was doubting. He wasn't sure if Jesus was really the Messiah. Understandably so. John's entire life was purposed for being the one to introduce to the world, the Messiah! He had already introduced Jesus as Messiah, so he needed to be sure that Jesus really is the one. Yet, John had been imprisoned, no longer able to insure that his purpose would be fulfilled. What could he do? He asked his disciples to find out. He needed to know that his work would not be in vain. What was Jesus' answer? He pointed to the evidence. The sick were healed and the good news was being preached. This is the sign of the ministry of Christ. When we wonder and doubt whether Christ is the one in whom we should place our hope, we need to examine. Are people experiencing God's healing grace? Are people receiving the good news of Christ? If so, yes. Jesus is the one. All our hope is in him alone.

Reflection Questions

When have you experienced the healing grace of God through Christ?

When have you experienced the good news of Jesus Christ?

Day 27

Creation: To know Christ as Lord over creation

Scripture: Luke 8:22-25

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. 23 As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. 24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Reflection

The Sea of Galilee is known for its squalls, where the rushing winds, destructive storms and mighty waves stir up with no warning. There is no telling of when the storms will come. To this Jesus and his disciples found themselves. The disciples were terrified. Rightfully so! They must've known very well stories of lives lost at sea. Some of the disciples were fishermen who had previously dealt with the dangerous waters.

Our lives can seem like the squalls on the Sea of Galilee. What do we do in the moments when we are caught off guard and the troubles of life overwhelm us? In our despair and distraught feelings, we can turn to our Savior. He teaches us to live by faith. "Where is your faith?" He will ask you, as an invitation to live by trusting in the one who is able to command the wind and the waves. The disciples might have thought that the safest place for them was on the shore, but in truth, the safest place was with Jesus, the master of creation. Therefore the disciples are overcome with awe and wonder when they see Jesus calming the storm. When you find yourself in the storms of life, call upon Christ is with you, and know that in his presence you are most secure.

Reflection Questions

Why does it matter that Jesus can call the storms?

When was a time Jesus was the safest place in a storm for you?

Day 28

Timing: That we might trust in Christ's timing

Scripture: Luke 8:40-42, 49-50

40 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. 41 Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house 42 because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. 49 While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore." 50 Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

Reflection

Jairus had sought out Jesus first. Jesus answered and was on his way to Jairus' home in response to a plea for healing. Jairus' daughter was deathly ill. Yet, on his way, someone interrupted! Another person was asking for healing. It was a woman who has been bleeding for 12 years. Imagine the urgency of Jairus! He might've thought, "Jesus! Hurry! Why are you stopping to heal this person? I need you to heal my daughter!" Yet, Jesus stopped to heal.

It turns out that after Jesus heals the woman, and a messenger from Jairus' house came to inform Jairus that his daughter was dead. Can you imagine the fear and the dread that came over Jairus? Perhaps even anger and resentment! Yet, Jesus looks at Jairus and says, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." Jesus then heads to Jairus' home and raises his daughter from the dead. Sometimes, God has a particular timing. God has a way. God has a timing. Our job is to seek Jesus and trust in his timing. Jairus sought a healing immediately. Jesus brought a raising from the dead at a later time. What we ask may not always happen in the way we want or expect. Yet, we can find comfort in knowing that Jesus has a timing and a way. Therefore, let's put our trust in his timing.

Reflection Questions

In what ways have you experienced God's timing differently than your timing?

In what ways did that experience cause you to grow in faith or think differently about life and God?

Day 29

MARCH 26

Provision: That we might know that Jesus is our provider

Scripture: Luke 9:10-17

10 When the apostles returned, they described for Jesus what they had done. Taking them with him, Jesus withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. 11 When the crowds figured it out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about God's kingdom, and healed those who were sick. 12 When the day was almost over, the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so that they can go to the nearby villages and countryside and find lodging and food, because we are in a deserted place." 13 He replied, "You give them something to eat." But they said, "We have no more than five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all these people." 14 (They said this because about five thousand men were present.) Jesus said to his disciples, "Seat them in groups of about fifty." 15 They did so, and everyone was seated. 16 He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them, and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. 17 Everyone ate until they were full, and the disciples filled twelve baskets with the leftovers.

Reflection

When the Israelites were living in the wilderness for forty years, all of their needs were met. They ate bread and quail every day. During the day, there was a cloud that covered the Israelites so that they could be protected from the blazing desert sun. In the evening, there was a pillar of fire to keep them warm in the freezing cold of the desert nights. When they encountered enemies, they were protected. The Israelites had a forty-year testimony of God's great faithfulness even as they wandered and had no idea what would be next in their journey. Centuries later, Jesus came to an Israel that was enslaved to the Roman Empire. The people of Israel needed to know that God was the same God from the stories of long ago. Can you imagine? Crowds of people are following Jesus. He is healing them and teaching them. They become hungry. Will he just do a momentary miraculous work and provide instruction on how to live? Or will he also provide for their needs? Praise God that Jesus provides!

Reflection Questions

In what ways do you believe God has provided for your everyday life?

What difference does it make to know that God is a provider God?

Day 30

Listen: That we might listen to Jesus above all others

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. 31 They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. 32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) 34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." 36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Reflection

We live in a world that has multiple voices that speak to us about realities, philosophies, world-views, and morals. Life is bombarded with decision making moments. The question is what informs our decision making matrix? Peter, James, and John were presented with this question when they joined Jesus on the top of a mountain where they saw Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus. Moses represented the Jewish Law, which is about the rules and regulations of the Jewish faith. Elijah represented the prophets, who served the role of indicting Israel for its failures, lifting up hope for the future. Then there was Jesus. Jesus who was the fulfillment of Law and Prophets, and the presence of God's life! Peter wanted to lift up all three persons equally, but the voice of God spoke through a cloud. The voices said, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

Our calling is to listen to the voice of Jesus. Our calling is to meditate and reflect on the teachings of Jesus. Our calling is to immerse ourselves into the gracious work of Jesus on the cross. There, we can find our discernment and our clarity. Jesus is our decision-making matrix.

Reflection Questions

In what ways does Jesus bring clarity to your decisions?

Day 31

Victory: That we might know that Jesus wins over demons

Scripture: Luke 9:37-43

37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not." 41 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." 42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

Reflection

Does light overcome darkness? All we have to do is turn on a light switch and know that the darkness of a room disappears. Scripture tells us that Jesus is the light of the world. When Jesus enters the space of spiritual darkness, the spiritual darkness disappears as automatically as natural darkness disappears automatically as regular light causes darkness to disappear.

In our journey of life, we are bound to encounter the powers of darkness at work. They can emerge in the form of discouragement, defeat, despair, and even destructive behavior (be it to the self or others). We can observe the power of darkness at work when we live in spaces of toxic division and opposition. In those spaces, when we call out to Jesus for salvation, we can witness the power of Christ over even the demons of our lives. May it be so! Amen.

Reflection Questions

Why does it matter that Jesus has overcome the powers of darkness?

In what ways have you experienced God overcoming the power of darkness in your life?

Day 32

Prayer: That we might know how to pray

Scripture: Luke 1 1:1-4

1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

2 He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come.

3 Give us each day our daily bread.

4 Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation. and deliver us from evil"

Reflection

The disciples observed the prayer life of Jesus. They witnessed how Jesus would pray and God would answer his prayers. The curiosity this sparked caused the disciples to ask Jesus to teach them to pray. I am thankful that they did that because this brought us the gift of the Lord's Prayer. The most well-known prayer in the world in every language is the Lord's Prayer. A very important spiritual practice that Jesus taught his disciples to do, it was the practice of prayer.

The gift of prayer in our lives is that prayer is a spiritual practice that any person can do regardless of spiritual experience, maturity, and knowledge. We begin by acknowledging who God is. We approach God like God is a loving parent who is great and mighty. We ask for the things of God to be made known and real. We ask for God to provide for our needs. We ask God to forgive us of our sins. We ask God to enable us to forgive others. We ask God to lead us not into temptation. A daily prayer of the Lord's Prayer positions us to pray for all things.

Reflection Questions

How does the Lord's Prayer shape your personal prayer life?

Why is it important that Jesus taught us how to pray?

Day 33

Surrender: That we might give up self-righteousness

Scripture: Luke 18:18-27

18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'" 21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26 Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible.

Reflection

When the rich young ruler came before Jesus, he wanted to know how to inherit eternal life. Jesus explained that it required one to be righteous in obedience to the Jewish Law. Righteousness means to be in right standing. Therefore, according to the paradigm of Jewish Law, one has to be perfect in obedience to the letter of the Law. The rich young ruler proceeds to respond with a confident boasting of how he has successfully obeyed the Law. Jesus answered, "You still lack one thing." Whenever we boast our own performance, Jesus will always say, "You will lack one thing." The only way to true righteousness is for us to trust in the righteousness of Christ. We are to boast not in ourselves, but to boast in the Lord. When we boast in our selves, we will be measured according to our performance. When we boast in Christ, we will be measured according to Christ's performance. Whom shall we boast in?

Reflection Questions

Why should we stop boasting in ourselves?

What assurance can we have if we boast in the Lord?

Day 34

Generosity: Celebrate repentance through generosity

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Reflection

Zacchaeus was rejected from Jewish society. As a Jewish man, he worked for the Roman order as a tax collector. This meant he was viewed as a traitor. For Jesus to seek him out and invite himself to Zacchaeus' house was easily a point of offense for the Jewish people. Yet, Jesus does so. Jesus sits at the same table with Zacchaeus. What does this say to us? Zacchaeus did not do anything to prove himself worthy of Jesus' presence. Jesus simply sought him out. Zacchaeus experienced grace. This caused him to repent; change his mind. He responded to this experience of grace by declaring that he will give his possessions to the poor, and pay back four times the amount he cheated of anyone. This is an extravagant response. This points us to an even greater extravagance: the gracious generosity of Christ's love, forgiveness, and invitation. Therefore, let us consider the extravagance of Christ's love for us. His extravagant grace models for us our own capacity to be generous. His extravagant grace enables us to be generous.

Reflection Questions

How has the generosity of Christ's love affected your ability for generosity?

Day 35

April 2

Hosanna: That we might cry out for salvation

Scripture: Luke 1 9:28-40

28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They replied, "The Lord needs it." 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Reflection

When a lifeguard rescues someone who is drowning, the person's loved ones are full of joy and gratitude for the lifeguard. The victim who is resuscitated and alive can be joyful and grateful for the life-saving act of the life guard. In a similar spirit, the crowds worshiped God with joy as Jesus entered Jerusalem. They believed Jesus was their Savior who had finally come to rescue the Israelites from Roman rule. They looked to Jesus as the one who could establish freedom.

Jesus came for a greater purpose and a greater kingdom. Not a self-governing nation state of Israel, but the kingdom of God that could reign God's grace and goodness in our lives. All of us can have joy in worship when we are able to see Jesus as Savior.

Reflection Questions

When do you find joy in worshiping God?

In what ways can your joy in worship be shared with others?

Day 36

Compassion: That we might weep over those who persecute us

Scripture: Luke 19:41-44

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Reflection

Jesus wept as he approached Jerusalem. He wept for the place where worship, sacrifice, and forgiveness should take place. He wept for the people who at one time were called to be a light to the world, but had become a place of darkness and sin. He wept for the people's refusal to believe in him and the self-demise that come upon them. Jesus has compassion not only for those who suffer from the ills of this world. Jesus also has compassion for those who are against him.

Do you know Jesus weeps for you when you refuse to believe and trust in him? The compassion of Jesus is more than feeling sorry for those who are without, or those who are suffering. The compassion of Jesus is even for those who persecute him, deny him, and even reject him. Later, he takes the cross, looks upon those who hurl insults at him and says, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." Even when we deny him and reject him, Jesus weeps for us and his heart is overwhelmed with compassion for us.

Reflection Questions

What difference does it make to know that Jesus weeps for those who persecute him, reject him, and even those who are his enemies?

In what ways do you see yourself as a recipient of Jesus' compassion?

Day 37

Service: New life through the body and blood of Christ

Scripture: Luke 22:7-20

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." 9 "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. 10 He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, 11 and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 12 He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there." 13 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. 14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." 17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Reflection

Jesus served his disciples during the Last Supper. He offered them bread and wine as the means through which we can always, all the time receive and experience the power of his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus serves us his life, and invites us to a life of serving. This new way of living is a way of serving. As Christ has given to me, I can also give. As Christ has served his life, I can give my life.

Reflection Questions

Why does it matter that Jesus served us with his life?

In what ways have you experienced Jesus serving you his salvation?

What can you do to serve someone Jesus today?

Day 38

Refreshment: God sends angels to refresh us in our trials

Scripture: Luke 22:39-44

39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. 40 On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." 41 He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Reflection

When we are exhausted from physical exertion, our bodies crave water to replenish hydration in our bodies. We feel the same way when we are facing the emotional and mental stress. When Jesus was praying in the garden before his arrest, he was praying with great stress as he began to bleed through his sweat. Science tells us that this happens when individuals undergo an incredible amount of stress. In the midst of this great measure of stress, an angel from heaven appeared to strengthen Jesus for the remainder of his journey. This gave him the resolve to press forward with the work of his suffering and death.

We can be a refreshment to people to the degree that we have experienced this refreshment from God. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen us and move powerful among us. The Holy Spirit can also send an angel to be present, fighting our battles, and strengthening us. We can truly learn to lean on God in our trials, especially the incredibly challenging stressful ones.

Reflection Questions

Why does it matter that God sends angels to help us in the midst of our challenges?

Describe a time when you experienced God's strength during a time of great need.

Day 39

Death: To trust God and bless others even in death

Scripture: Luke 2 2:44-49

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. 47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." 48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. 49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Reflection

In the face of death, there is a fear that often creeps into people's thoughts. What's going on? Is this really the end of my life? Will I get to heaven? I believe these questions might have entered through Jesus' thoughts because Jesus has faced every one of our trials and temptations (but not sinned). When we closely observe the death of Jesus on the cross, we see Jesus sharing God's love, offering forgiveness, compassion, and eventually committing his life to the Father. It matters that Jesus died with such great assurance. It gives us the capacity to have assurance.

How we pass on to glory has an effect beyond our journey to the grave. It matters that Jesus modeled dying for us. Even in death, Jesus put his whole trust in his Father. He took time to forgive. He made sure that people were taken care of. Barring any tragedies, death might be a far cry away from your life trajectory. Even so, now is the time to meditate, reflect, and cast your life on Christ so that when the time comes for us to pass on to glory, we can be full of faith in Christ and also be a blessing to people around us. Even in death, salvation is so strong, we do not have to fear.

Reflection Questions

Why does it matter that Jesus sets an example for death?

How does the death of Christ give us assurance for our own death?

Day 40

APRIL 7 GOOD FRIDAY

Unexpected: Unbeknownst to us, God is doing something new

Scripture: Luke 23:50-56

50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Reflection

Jesus was laid in a tomb. This was unexpected. The Jesus movement that began three years prior was silent and appeared to be non-existent. The disciples were hiding out of fear of also being captured and killed. When Jesus was buried in a tomb, and there was silence. Yet, God was working in ways that the followers of Jesus could not see. What was happening? Resurrection was on its way! We get to say it with such assurance, but the people would not have known. Unbeknownst to them, God was unfolding God's plan for resurrection.

In the same way, we experience what seem to be great setbacks in life. In those seasons of life, we are called to continue believing. This is because God is put to something we cannot see. The work that God is prepping is far greater than what was before. God is always doing something and getting ready to release resurrection and victory. In those seasons, we need to expect the unexpected, and by faith believe that God will do a resurrection work.

Reflection Questions

Why does it matter that even in the silence of a tomb, God is up to a resurrection work?

In what ways has silent periods of your life revealed that God is doing salvation and resurrection work in your life or loved ones?