

A SLO CITY LENT DEVOTIONAL

40 DAYS

IN THE LIFE OF JESUS



“...the Son of
Man did not
come to be
served, but
to serve,
and to give
his life as
a ransom
for many.”

MATTHEW 20:28

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“...surely I am
with you
always, to
the very end
of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:20

The Season of Lent

The season of Lent invites us to intentionally pause certain aspects of our lives and practice centering ourselves in prayer and scripture on the life and teachings of Jesus. It's a time where we're invited to sacrifice or give up something every day—whether a meal or social media or something else—and replace that with time spent remembering the hope of Jesus. Together, as a church, we want to recognize the need for hope, salvation, justice, and renewal that we see in our own lives and in the world around us and turn our gaze to the only One in which these are found.

This devotional is a way for us to be united as a church centered on Jesus. It's our hope that this time spent in scripture and prayer would posture our hearts in such a way to fully celebrate the new life and new hope offered in the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday.

THIS DEVOTIONAL WAS WRITTEN AS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
SLO CITY CHURCH AND CU CHURCH IN URBANA, IL.

DAY 1

Matthew 3:1-12

“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

4 John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes

one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Jesus loved John the Baptist, and John loved Jesus. In fact, they were cousins, and in age, only a few months apart. But they saw each other as more than cousins. Jesus, the Son of God, knew of John before the creation of the world. He knew ahead of time what the purpose and role of John’s life would be. He would be a forerunner to Jesus, one to tell the world the Messiah was coming. And when Jesus showed up, John would point toward Jesus and tell those around him, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!” Not only did Jesus know who John was, John knew who Jesus was. The promised Messiah. The Savior. The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He knew Jesus was greater and superior, and John was excited about the arrival of Jesus on the scene. **Like John, how can we live our lives pointing to Jesus and telling those around us, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”?**

DAY 2

Matthew 3:13-17

13 “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

John the Baptist was sent ahead of Jesus to let people know that the King was coming. His message in Matthew 3:2 was, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near.” People were coming to be baptized by John in repentance and preparation for the coming King.

Baptism is an acknowledgment that my dependence is not on myself, my ways are broken, and my trust is in Jesus for forgiveness and new life. John becomes confused when Jesus

arrives on the scene asking to be baptized. He asks Jesus, “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” Jesus had no reason to repent, as he was the Son of God without sin. Jesus answered him that “it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.”

Let’s think through this a little more. Why would Jesus be baptized and what does that teach us about what we should do? Hebrews 4:15 teaches that Jesus is able to empathize with us even though he is without sin. Jesus understands us and his baptism identifies him with sinners like us. We don’t follow a God who is far off. We don’t serve a God who doesn’t understand. We serve a God whose name is “Immanuel” God with us (Matthew 1:23).

Baptism is an act that unites us with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We are saved when we put our trust in Jesus and what he accomplished in his life, death and resurrection. We are obedient when we acknowledge this by connecting ourselves to Jesus through baptism. **This Lent, consider how much we need Jesus. How can you affirm your need for his life, death, and resurrection?**

DAY 3

Matthew 4:1-11

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."

We have now begun this journey in the wilderness of our faith, in the desert, in the high places above the city. We are tasked with wandering for these 40 days and nights, sent to stare at our temptations and our tempters. After all, the bulk of the chapter describes Jesus's encounter with embodied temptation, the lure of sin, the sweet deceptive siren call of the enemy.

But let's not miss the importance of verses 1 and 2 – "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished." Let's consider the geography of grace during this Lenten season, paying attention to where we encounter God on a daily basis. We start that journey here in the desert wilderness, famished. Where are your deserts? Where is your wilderness?

The wilderness can offer amazing scenery, but for all its beauty, there are always dangers. Jesus doesn't face the temptations of the enemy on the first day. He spends a season preparing himself for the task.

He wanders in the wilderness, in the presence of the Spirit, and faces the daily risks of life around him. **What preparation do you need to do this Lenten season? What are the temptations? What risks and what temptations does it put in front of you? And what grace do you find there that sustains your soul and invites you to grow in spirit and wisdom?**

DAY 4

Matthew 4:18-22

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

This day began like any other day for Peter and Andrew, James and John. They were two different sets of fisherman brothers working in a profession they knew well and had found success. However, Jesus saw them for who they truly were —fishers of people. Jesus’s invitation was straight and to the point, “Come, follow me.” There wasn’t a grand announcement or speech, a prerequisite test, or prophetic word Jesus gave to them. There wasn’t a set time, appointment or schedule. Rather, Jesus walked into the middle of their busy lives, called out to them, and they immediately responded. Neither pair of brothers asked questions, made excuses, justifications or rationalizations. They heard the voice of Jesus and simply obeyed and trusted

the one who was calling them. They knew full well this call wasn't just for Sundays or a few days a week — it was for the rest of their lives. The call of Jesus is an everyday calling and an every moment choice. Wholehearted faith requires action and obedience in response to the greatest of callings: “Come, follow me.” **Ask yourself, how can I quiet myself to hear the calling of Jesus and obey him today?**

“Come,
follow me,”
Jesus said,
“and I will
send you out
to fish
for people.”

MATTHEW 4:19

DAY 5

Matthew 6:5-15

5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 "This, then, is how you should pray:

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
10 your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

11 Give us today our daily bread.

*12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'*

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Prayer can be intimidating. Prayer can be daunting. However, prayer should be a natural rhythm in our life. Scripture says, “when you pray,” meaning that this should be a part of our walk with Jesus. Jesus gives us a guide to use as we pray. We first acknowledge God is our father and His kingdom is what should come first. He then guides us to realize that He is our provider and that we should be thankful that He forgives us, pushing us to forgive others. Finally, we are to ask for protection from temptation. As we reflect on the prayer guide that Jesus gives us, we should first ask whether or not we are intentionally trying to make prayer a natural part of our day. Do we have time set apart that we can spend with God? This might be in the morning as you get ready for the day, during your drive to work, or different moments throughout the day. **God wants to spend time with you. Are you making time for Him?**

DAY 6

Matthew 6:16-18

16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

In this passage we read about how we should fast. To fast, or abstain from eating as a religious practice, was common throughout Jewish life. This practice was annually observed on the “Day of Atonement,” and we even see Jesus fasting during his earthly life. The purpose is not to merely deprive oneself, but it is an intentional sacrifice of earthly needs to focus on our heavenly Father.

When we read in the Old Testament (Leviticus 16:29-34; 23:26-32) about the Day of Atonement, we learn on this day the Jewish people did not work and did not eat. They humbled themselves, mourned over their sins and wore sackcloth and ash on their faces. The priests made sacrifices so the people could be cleansed of their sins.

This day symbolizes Jesus. Because Jesus came to earth and lived a sinless life, He became our perfect and final sacrifice by giving his life on the Cross. A priest is no longer required to make a sacrifice on our behalf! Forgiveness is ours to accept through Jesus Christ.

The passage in Leviticus goes on to give us direct instruction on how to fast. This practice is to be shared between us and God. Verse 16 says clearly, those who distort their appearance and make their actions a show to others will receive their reward: adulation from others. A fleeting and hollow prize! But when we humble ourselves and share our practice solely with God, the reward is a deeper relationship with our Creator. Verse 17 says, “anoint your head and wash your face,” which seems like an odd command. But what it actually depicts is ridding ourselves of the ashes and sackcloth, mourning sin no longer, living in joy that forgiveness offers!

What is something you can sacrifice today in order to spend that time focusing on Jesus? (Ex. TV, Social Media, a meal, a workout, etc.)

DAY 7

Matthew 7:7-12

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

I remember when my kids were young and they constantly asked me for things. Can I have another cookie? Can I have a soda? Can I get this toy? Can I have this candy? They had no problem asking me, seeking me out wherever I might be and continuing to knock on the door of my brain until I heard them or gave them the attention they wanted.

In today’s passage, Jesus is asking us to do three things. Ask, seek and knock — all with promises attached to them.

Let’s look at the first: Ask. Jesus said if we ask, it will be given.

What things are you asking for in your life? Safety? Health?
Relational help? Spiritual help?

Many times, we stop asking God and try to attain these things by ourselves. As the verse says, our Father knows how to give good things to us. Why not ask Him?

The second thing we're commanded to do is to seek. Remember playing hide and seek? The key was to find a good hiding place. It's good to know God is not hiding from us. He wants us to find Him. In fact, He is right in front of us! If we seek Him, we will find Him. Have you become worn out in seeking the Lord? Take another look! He's right here!

The last thing this passage says to do is to knock, and the door will be opened. Sometimes when I've had a long day and finally make it home to my cozy couch and diet Mt. Dew, I just want to "veg out" in front of the TV and watch wheel of fortune. Then I hear it! A disturbing knock at the door —Ugh! Isn't it nice to know that our knocking on God's door for His blessings and answers is not annoying to Him? He is glad to open the door to us and say, "Come on in!" Let's remember that the literal translation of this passage says, "Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking." God expects us to not give up. **Jesus died on the cross to make a way for us to enter into that kind of relationship with our Father. So ask, seek, and knock away!**

DAY 8

Matthew 9:9-13

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew was an outsider. He wasn't liked by the community because of his job as a tax collector. Tax collectors were known for their dishonesty, making money for themselves using other people's taxes, and were among the most despised workers in the ancient world. Jesus chose Matthew to join his team. He said, "Follow me." It seems like a simple request, but it is more than a question. It's more than a one-time ask. In the Greek, this is a present imperative or an ongoing (read: making it a habit) command. Jesus is calling Matthew,

the outsider, into a lifetime of discipleship following Jesus. One of my all-time favorite writers describes this life of discipleship as, “an ongoing attachment to Jesus.” Did you notice that Matthew doesn’t hesitate? Luke 5:28 tells us he leaves it all to follow Jesus. Matthew throws a banquet at his house and invites all his tax collector buddies to spend some time with Jesus. We can’t miss that Jesus goes to the dinner party filled with despised outsiders or people with whom the religious community (Pharisees) didn’t associate. Meals were important social occasions in the first century. To share a meal with someone was a declaration that they were accepted into your group. Jesus was saying, “We are friends.” What the surrounding community thought or the religious group thought didn’t matter to Jesus. Jesus only saw people who needed a Savior. Let me finish with a couple things for us to think about. **If you feel like the outsider, Jesus is saying to you, “You’re welcome on his team.”** Maybe you know someone who is an outsider, and Jesus is calling you to share your life with them. Maybe Jesus is inviting you to follow him, but you have been waiting for the right time or something has been holding you back. **To use Jesus’s words as our direction for today, “Follow me.”**

DAY 9

Matthew 9:35-38

35 "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

People who live separated from God are like sheep without a shepherd. Lost, hungry, thirsty, in danger, etc. And as Jesus traveled around and encountered people, He saw their needs. But He didn't just see their needs, He cared for their needs. And He didn't just care for their needs, but He cared for them. He cared for their souls. Matthew 9 says that He was moved with compassion. Jesus felt for them. His heart went out to them. The word used for 'moved with compassion' is the Greek word *spagchnistheis*. It is the strongest word for pity in the Greek language. This is the kind of love and compassion that led Jesus to the cross. This is the kind of love and compassion that He has for us! And He calls us to live out that same compassion. He calls us to see the greatness of human

need around us, which is plentiful. We are to be laborers of His love and in His love. So a couple questions for us: **Are we praying daily to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers? Are we willing to go ourselves? Are we moved by compassion for the lost who need the Shepherd? Who in your life needs the Shepherd?**

Ask the
Lord of the
harvest...
to send out
workers into
His harvest
field.”

MATTHEW 9:38

DAY 10

Matthew 11:28-30

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

When is a time in your life where you felt desperate? There is something about the feeling of desperation that makes us completely overwhelmed. One might say we are weary or burdened when we reach a point of desperation. In desperation we recognize things are out of our control. We don't have the ability to fix what is broken by ourselves. We are weary and burdened because we realize we don't have it all by our self. The beauty of desperation is it helps us see our need for Jesus, who humbly and gently invites us to himself with the promise of rest. Unfortunately, all of us are tempted to take our **desperate** moments and find something to distract us away from them. If we don't distract, often times we look to find something that will numb us. **Where do you turn in desperation? Take some time today and write down where you go in desperation. This Lent, hear the call of Jesus to come with your weariness and burdens and find his rest.**

“Come to me
all who are
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and you will
find rest for
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MATTHEW 11:28

DAY 11

Matthew 12:1-8

“At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. 2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

3 He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.

5 Or haven’t you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? 6 I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.

7 If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.

8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Sabbath law commanded absolute rest, which meant that even menial or minor work was prohibited. Why? Because all people need and deserve rest. And because such laws stood against the laws of the oppressors (in Israel’s history, Egypt) who give no rest. And because if God doesn’t command it, too many will not take it, or more likely, will deprive others of rest.

Sabbath law was ordained for the protection and flourishing of God's people.

But as with all law, it is easy to define one's obedience and even one's righteousness by keeping the letter of the law rather than working to achieve its original intent and spirit. And that's part of what Jesus suggests has happened in his day. Jesus is asserting that there are exceptions to the law.

Say what?!?! I imagine Jesus's audience of Pharisees saying, "Did Jesus just say that he is greater than the priests and even than King David?!?" Yeah, that's exactly what Jesus is saying as he goes on to announce that he, the Son of Man, is Lord of the Sabbath.

Suddenly it's easier to see some of the reasons for the growing antagonism between Jesus and the religious rulers of his time. This is about more than an assertion of authority or growing tension. Because Jesus declares himself not just "Lord" in general, but "Lord of the Sabbath." The one who not only has authority over the Sabbath but also the one who has authority for the Sabbath; the one, that is, who will achieve the purpose of the Sabbath and bring it to fulfillment.

Jesus is the one and only place weary souls to find actual rest — the rest of contentment and acceptance and forgiveness and grace. For this reason, He is Lord of the Sabbath. **Jesus is the one who breaks it in order to keep it, who remembers its intent and fulfills it, who accomplishes its end more fully than all the laws of the Sabbath ever could. How will you honor the Sabbath?**

DAY 12

Matthew 12:15-21

15 “Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. 16 He warned them not to tell others about him. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

*18 “Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.*

*19 He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.*

*20 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.*

21 In his name the nations will put their hope.”

We’ve all been “outsiders” somewhere, finding ourselves in a place where we felt like everyone knew that we didn’t belong. Ever felt grossly underdressed? Outclassed? Small? Insignificant? Poor? Like an impostor about to be discovered at any moment?

In Matthew’s gospel Jesus’s mission is limited to Israel, the sons of Abraham. When Jesus sends out his disciples he

begins by restricting their activity to insiders: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt 10:5–6). When a woman begs for her daughter to be healed, Jesus protested, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt 15:24). In Matthew’s church the quintessential outsider was a goy, a “non-Jew,” a Gentile! They pray with empty phrases (Matt 6:7), are consumed by ungodly worry (Matt 6:32) and are the kind of people that have no place among the family of true believers (Matt 18:17). Jesus’s mission in Matthew from birth is “to save his people,” to save Israel (Matt 1:21). Did someone in Matthew’s church begin to think that Jesus’s mission to Israel meant that he didn’t have time for those dirty, worrying, empty-praying Gentiles? Surely you can think of some outsider, some sinner beyond even the reach of Jesus.

Yet here we see Jesus announcing that his identity, his mission, his divinely appointed task announced by a prophet a thousand years ago was to “proclaim justice to the nations” and that in his name “the nations” would put their hope. The word for “nations” in this passage (Matt 12:18, 21) is the same word used elsewhere in Matthew for “Gentile.” **As God’s chosen servant, Jesus came for Gentiles, for outsiders, for the underdressed, outclassed, insignificant impostors. He came for sinners. He came for you and me.**

DAY 13

Mathew 14:13-21

13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

16 Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

17 "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

18 "Bring them here to me," he said. 19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.

Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Wow. What a story. We see Jesus do a lot in this story. We see Jesus take something that seems small and insignificant and use it to do something big. In looking at this story, I'd like to focus in on the words Jesus says, "You give them something to eat." Jesus asks his disciples, after what I imagine was a long day, to feed the crowds that had been following him. Can you imagine what the disciples were thinking? There were over 5,000 people within the crowd that day, and they were supposed to feed them all? How many times in life when Jesus asks us to do something and we look at the situation or opportunity and wonder, "Really? How can I do that?" In the response of the disciples, they do the same thing. They say, "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish." We can see the doubt in what they thought was possible. **As followers of Jesus we are to be obedient in what he asks of us. What is he asking of you?**

DAY 14

Matthew 14:22-36

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately

“Take
courage!
It is I.
Don't be
afraid.”

MATTHEW 14:27

Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

34 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him 36 and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

DAY 14 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus sends his disciples ahead and spends time alone to prepare and pray for the next leg of their journey. Each mission they go on together marches inevitably to the trials he knows will await in Jerusalem.

The disciples venture onto the Sea of Galilee and soon face a violent storm. Jesus continues to pray late into the night, even into the next morning. We're told that it isn't until the "fourth watch," likely between 3:00 and 6:00 AM that they finally see Jesus coming toward them. By this time they've been fighting the storms at least nine hours. Unsurprisingly, when Jesus comes into view, they fear he is an evil spirit!

Jesus calls out to them and says not to fear because "It is I," or in their language, "I am." This calls us back to the interaction between Moses and God at the burning bush (Exodus 3). The

disciples would have been very familiar with this story and with this name for God. Think of the assurance it brought them in the middle of the storm to know their Savior was in their midst.

Imagine the furious waves, the lightning flashing, the chaos of the night. Jesus demonstrates his power and authority over all creation by walking toward them on top of the water. In him there was no fear or doubt. He stepped into the boat and instantly the storms ceased. With fear and doubt gone, the only fitting response was to worship Jesus and recognize he is truly the Son of God!

Take a moment today to worship and thank God for His power. Praise Him for who He is and for all that He has done.

DAY 15

Mathew 15:21-28

21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

27 "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

28 Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Have you ever felt like you didn't belong? When I was in Junior High, all I wanted was to make the basketball team. I really didn't want to go to practice every day or run those terrible drills. I just wanted the cool uniform. They were bright green with a panther on the back. Awesome, right?! Well, I didn't make the team. I felt like a dog, like I didn't measure up, like I didn't count. This is how the lady from today's passage was perceived in society. She wasn't from Israel, so she wasn't that important. She was seen as one who only deserved the crumbs off the table, not the t-bone steak. This could have been the end of the story, but she didn't give up. She figured even the Lord's crumbs were all she needed to get her prayers answered. Jesus saw her heart and said she had "great faith." Wow! I hope He would say that of me. Her prayer for her daughter's healing was answered. It wasn't because of who she was, but because she was desperate enough to cry out to the One who could perform miracles. **No matter how you feel about yourself or what people have said about you, remember, it's not about who you are but about who Jesus is. He's waiting for us to cry out to Him.**

DAY 16

Matthew 16:13-16

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

I love a good question. Jesus asked his disciples the most important question we can be asked, "Who do you say I am?" How we answer this question determines what we believe to be true about Jesus. What we believe to be true about Jesus will affect every single thing in our lives. Some of us might see Jesus as a genie. Whenever I have something I want, I can rub the Jesus lamp and he will grant me my wish. Some of us might see Jesus as a vending machine. I put my money in, and I get something back in return. Some of us might see

“Who do you say I am?”

MATTHEW 16:15

Jesus as the nice old man. He comes alongside me to pat me on the head and encourage me with kind words. Some of us might see Jesus as a cop. He is sitting around waiting for me to break the next rule so he can punish me. How we answer this question will determine how we follow him. When Jesus says “you,” it is plural. Although the Bible isn’t written to us, it is written for us. This means we are included in the “you.” If you have ever seen a baptism you will recognize Peter’s answer. We call it the good confession. What does Peter mean when he says, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God?” Jesus is the anointed one that we have been waiting for. He is our promised Messiah or deliverer who came to earth on a rescue mission to save us from our sins. He willingly sacrificed his life for my sin on a cross, to conquer death and give us an eternal hope that never fades. He does all of this simply because he loves us, no strings. This declaration of Jesus radically changes everything in our lives. **Who is Jesus in your life today? Is he the Messiah, the Son of the living God?**

DAY 17

Matthew 16:17-20

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Peter loved Jesus, and Peter walked with Jesus. Something incredible happens when we walk with Jesus. We begin to sense His leading, His nudges, His Word, His speaking to our hearts. So many times we expect or look for God to speak to

“...on this rock
I will build
my church...”

MATTHEW 16:18

us in ways that are earth-shattering, strange or unnatural. In this instance, God spoke to Peter naturally. It was so normal that Peter didn't even realize it was the Father who spoke to Him. This shows how walking with Jesus leads His words and His ways to flow through us naturally. We get to walk with Jesus, we get to know Jesus and we get to be His Church. And we must remember, it's His Church. He is the One who builds His Church. The word Church in this passage, “Ekklesia”, means “called-out group.” We are a group of people called out to follow Jesus. In return, Jesus promises the gates of Hell won't prevail against us. If we're honest, sometimes we want to build the Church. We want it to belong to us. **But when we walk with Jesus and obey His nudges, we can trust all He will do in and through us. Today, how can you walk more closely with Jesus?**

DAY 18

Matthew 16:21-27

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

When someone makes bold claims, we are forced to decide what we believe about them. In this passage Jesus makes

many statements that, unless they are true, would be crazy. But if they are true, there could be no small response. We would do well not to minimize or ignore his claims. He foretells of his death, burial and resurrection, followed by a call to give up our lives to follow him.

Following Jesus starts the process of dying to self. Remember, a cross is a killing device and he tells us to take it up. It seems ironic that Jesus's call to be saved and to find life begins with dying to self and losing the life we currently have. What is he trying to point us to?

When we remain consumed by our own passions, desires, wants and dreams, we have no space for the passions, desires, wants and dreams of Jesus. When we are self-consumed, it leaves no space to be consumed by Jesus. Again, we are forced to wrestle with what we believe about the boldness of the claims of Jesus. Is he worth it?

We will never experience the life to which Jesus has called us without losing the one we already have. We won't lose the life we have unless we trust that it is worth giving up everything for him. **Do you believe Jesus is who he says he is? Are you willing to die to yourself and find life in him?**

DAY 19

Matthew 18:2-5

*2 “He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them.
3 And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”*

Watching my children grow up and become more self-sufficient makes it easy to forget how dependent they were when they were younger. Babies that need everything to survive become walking, talking, little people. Then, eventually they become teenagers and, one day, adults. It still amazes me to see my youngest child get himself ready in the mornings — pour his own bowl of cereal — realizing that not too many years ago he was a “helpless” newborn.

When I read the verses above I am reminded as a mature adult, from a worldly perspective, I am pretty much self-

sufficient. My husband and I are employed; we can purchase the things we need (and don't need). I still have my health. I have a loving church family. But the key word in the first sentence of this paragraph is "worldly."

The reality is God is my provider. Jesus is the reason I am acceptable to God although I am not worthy of God. I am not really self-sufficient without Him. I am dependent on God for everything, just as my children are dependent on me for survival.

As adults, we can become too self-sufficient and have too big of an ego. I pray God will help us to focus on Him in a childlike way, realizing we are dependent on Him for everything that matters. Do you realize your dependence on God?

DAY 20

Matthew 18:10-14

10 “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. [11]

12 “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Cory Asbury’s famous worship song “Reckless Love” was so popular it was nominated for a Grammy in 2019. The chorus chants about the “overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love” of God, a love that “leaves the ninety-nine.” The chorus refers to Jesus’s parable of the lost sheep and the shepherd who risks his herd to go after the lost one.

Whenever I think of the parable of the lost sheep, my mind jumps to this song and the story it tells of God’s tremendous love. I picture God going after the outcasts with frightening intensity. I see a God who welcomes prostitutes, sinners, tax

collectors, drunkards, drug addicts and every other category of people written off by polite society. But that picture of reckless love is the parable of the lost sheep from Luke's Gospel (Luke 15:3-7), not Matthew's.

In Matthew, the sheep is not "lost." No, according to Matthew's version of the story, the sheep had "wandered" (Matt 18:12, 13). The word "wander" is used seven times by Matthew, and it always describes someone who should know better but has been "deceived" (Matt 22:29; 24:4, 5, 11, 24). Deception can be just as dangerous as shame.

The most heartbreaking example is when the Sadducees, a group of leaders steeped in the Bible, posed a theological riddle to Jesus in attempt to mock the idea of resurrection (Matt 22:23-28). Jesus answered their mockery with characteristic honesty, "You are deceived, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt 22:29). The problem with the Sadducees was not that they felt like they were "lost." Their problem was that they had been deceived.

Yes, as Luke reminds us, Jesus loves the outcasts. But in Matthew, Jesus's story of the wandering sheep is not about God's love for the outcast. It's about God's love for the deceived. It's a reminder that God's love is for those who were once a part of the fold and at some point, for some reason, wandered away. **No matter what lies you have come to believe about yourself or about God, or how far you've wandered away, God's reckless love is for you too.**

DAY 21

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed

him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

DAY 21 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 18:21-35

How can we read this scripture and not find ourselves in the middle of it? Throughout the Bible there are many stories we read that give us great pictures of what not to do. This is one of those. In Jesus day it was common expectation for someone to forgive a person for repeated sin up to three times and then there would be no more forgiveness. Peter thought he had a big heart and that he was being extremely gracious when he says, “up to seven times”. But, the grace of Jesus is extravagant and so He tells Peter a parable. The king in this story gives us a picture of what Jesus has done for us. The King does something for us we don't deserve. It doesn't matter how big the debt of sin in our life is, the grace of the King is always greater than our debt. He gives us freedom when we have a

debt to be paid. The servant in this story, on the other hand, does what we so often do when we forget what the King has done for us on the cross. When we forget about the freedom Jesus has given us through his sacrifice on the cross, we stop seeing people the way the King does. As a follower of Jesus we receive the extravagant grace of Jesus and then we are called to give that same gift away to the people in our lives. At SLO City Church we talk a lot about loving God and loving people. **If we don't see people the way Jesus sees people, it will be hard for us to walk in grace and mercy with those who are in our daily lives. Who is someone you've not seen the way Jesus sees them?**

DAY 22

Matthew 19:16-30

16 *Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"*

17 *"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."*

18 *"Which ones?" he inquired.*

Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony,

19 honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"

20 *"All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"*

21 *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

22 *When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, 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.”

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

27 Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

DAY 22 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 19:16-30

In this passage and accounts in the other Gospels that record the same interaction, we learn a lot about a young man. He was a man of wealth and power; he was a devoted follower of Jewish law. Some even believe he may have been a Pharisee or at least in some position of religious leadership.

Jesus and the man engage in a conversation. The young ruler asks Jesus which good deed he must do in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He claims to be completely obeying the laws and yet he recognizes something is missing. Jesus immediately points out that only God is good. Understanding God's goodness reveals that the Kingdom cannot be earned by any amount of good deeds. Jesus knows of the man's wealth and power and misplaced identity. They had become an idol in his life, taking the place that God should hold in his heart. Jesus turns the conversation from outward conformity to the law and instead begins to examine the man's heart inwardly.

“...with God
all things
are possible...”

MATTHEW 19:26

The young ruler had no doubt given money to the poor in obedience to his righteous duty. But Jesus asks him to give everything he owns in exchange for the eternal treasure found by placing his faith in Jesus.

Unfortunately, even though Jesus gives the young ruler the answer he seeks, he was unwilling to accept it, and he leaves full of sorrow. Jesus declares to his disciples how difficult it is to make this exchange — giving up earthly comfort and security for promise of eternal life. But he goes on to reveal our heavenly reward when we obey his commands.

Ask God to reveal anything in your life that is taking a place of importance that is rightfully his.

DAY 23

Matthew 20:1-16

1 *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.*

3 *“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ 5 So they went.*

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6 About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

7 *“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.*

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

8 *“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his*

foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'

9 "The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

13 "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

DAY 23 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 20:1-16

When I was a kid, I received an allowance. My jobs were to mow the yard, take out the trash and clean the garage. I hated those jobs. My sisters got easy jobs. Help with dinner, and... well, that's basically it. At the end of the week, we all got the same pay. Unfair! Right? That's what I thought. My jobs were terribly hard, and nobody wanted them. But the pay was the same.

That's what is happening in this story. Some workers felt like they deserved more pay, but the landowner treated them all the same. What does this say about God and the way He sees us?

“So the last
will be first,
and the first
will be last.”

MATTHEW 20:16

The Bible says man looks at the outside, but God looks at the heart. This is so true, isn't it? We have our own measuring stick of what's important, what jobs are important, or who is most important. That's not how it is in the Kingdom. Whether you're the greatest stadium preacher of all time or someone who's in charge of the Church kitchen, the pay is the same.

God looks at the heart and cares less about what we do for Him than about how loving our relationship is with Him. **Maybe that's why He said, "The first shall be last." Isn't it great to be at the end of the line? As long as Jesus is in the front, I'm good with that!**

DAY 24

Matthew 20:17-24

17 Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, 18 “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death 19 and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life! 20 Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 21 “What is it you want?” he asked. She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.” 22 “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered. 23 Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.” 24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.”

Have you ever had one of those conversations where you miss the important information because you were too focused on something you wanted to say? This is one of those moments. Jesus is making one of his most important statements about

his future. He does this four times in the Gospel of Matthew, and this is the third (16:21; 17:22-23, & 26:2). He pulls aside the twelve disciples and tells them that a day is coming where he will be betrayed and sold out to the leaders. Those leaders will condemn him to his death, publicly mock him, torture him, hang him on a cross. Then he will be raised to life three days later. Right after Jesus gives the prediction for his coming death, James and John want to talk about their status or greatness next to Jesus. They were so caught up in what they wanted to say that they missed Jesus describing what greatness in his kingdom looks like. His greatness looks like serving people who will betray us, serving the people who sell us out, loving people who don't deserve it, endurance in hardship for the sake of others, and being willing to sacrifice your life. In Jesus's kingdom, greatness is turned upside down. Greatness in his kingdom is not about my status or my position; it is about my sacrifice for the sake of someone else. Let's not miss the most important message because we are too concerned about our own greatness. **List out a couple ways you can lovingly follow Jesus's great example and sacrifice for the good of someone else today.**

DAY 25

Matthew 20:25-28

25 “Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Have you ever heard the phrase, “Do as I say, not as I do?” It’s a picture of someone telling another how to live or act without being willing to live or act that way themselves. We are imperfect people in need of a perfect savior. I am an imperfect dad, and I know there are times I tell my kids to do something or respond in a way I’m not doing myself. I’m telling them to obey what I say, not what I do. But Jesus is not like that. Jesus told us to serve, to love, to sacrifice, to die to self, to take up our crosses. But He didn’t just tell us to do that, He did it Himself. He, Himself, served. He, Himself, loved at all costs. He, Himself, sacrificed. He, Himself, died to self. And He literally took up His cross. We can rest in the truth that we have a perfect Savior and a perfect Teacher. Jesus not only taught us how to live, but lived as our perfect example. **Today and this week, how can you die to self and serve those around you with the love of Jesus?**

“...the Son of
Man did not
come to be
served, but
to serve,
and to give
his life as
a ransom
for many.”

MATTHEW 20:28

DAY 26

Matthew 21:1-11

*1*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, *2* saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. *3* If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5 “Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. *7* They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them

for Jesus to sit on. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

11 The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

DAY 26 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 21:1-11

In this passage there is a picture of Jesus riding into Jerusalem as King. He has instructed his disciples to bring him a donkey and a colt on which he would ride into Jerusalem. The scene erupts as Jesus enters the city with the crowds laying out their coats as a red-carpet shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" This took place within a week of Jesus being sentenced to death on a cross where crowds would soon be shouting, "Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him!" What happened? How could things turn so quickly? Why would the crowd turn on Jesus?

Some of the details in this passage may help us understand. One of which to note was that Jesus entered Jerusalem during Passover. This was a time where Jerusalem's population would be nearly five to six times larger than normal. Israelites from across the region would come together to celebrate the time God freed their ancestors from slavery in Egypt by the

blood of the lamb (Exodus 12). A king would often ride on a donkey as a symbol of peace as opposed to riding on a war horse as a sign of power. The shout of Hosanna literally meant “save us.” It is clear the people desired Jesus to be King, but the kind of king Jesus would be is not what they expected. They wanted to be freed from their oppressors and rule over the nations. Jesus came to rule eternally and offered peace to the world through the blood he shed. Few in this moment realized he was here for a lasting Exodus or Passover and that it would be accomplished by the shedding of his blood (lamb) on the cross. **Take some time today and reflect on the lasting freedom King Jesus offers by the shedding of his blood.**

DAY 27

Matthew 21:12-13

12 "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 13 "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"

Temple behavior expectations were on red alert after Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey. The next action he performed only added fuel to the fire. Only priests could enter the temple, which took up a small part of the mount and was surrounded by three courts. Israelite men could enter the court closest to the temple. Israelite men and women could occupy the next court. But the Court of the Gentiles (which is where I would be), was the court furthest from the temple. It was the closest a non-Jew could get to the sanctuary.

From around the world, first-century Jews came to the temple at Passover to sacrifice to the Lord. It was impractical to bring sacrificial animals long distances, so they were made available for purchase in Jerusalem. Most Jews paid the temple tax at Passover, and moneychangers were there to convert Roman coinage into appropriate currency. Pagan slogans on Roman money made it unacceptable for the house

of the Lord. Though not inherently evil, these practices became occasions for sin. Travelers were paying ridiculous rates to exchange money. Sellers exploited those in poverty by overcharging poor men's offerings of pigeons and doves. To make things worse, these merchants set up shop in the Court of the Gentiles, making it useless as a place of prayer due to the hustle and bustle the buying and selling created.

For this reason, Jesus drove out the sellers (Matt. 21:12). These merchants and the priests who allowed their presence cared nothing for true worship as long as they could make money and keep their rituals. Our Savior hated this, as it kept the nations from learning about the living God in His sanctuary. We cannot underestimate the importance of this act. It showed Jesus as having authority to purify and take charge of the temple, a task that put him more at odds with the Sanhedrin, or the folks in charge.

At the very least, Jesus's cleansing of the temple illustrates how concerned he is with purity of worship. Our corporate praise and prayer is always in need of reformation, as it is easy for anti-Christian practices to slip in unnoticed. **Consider the importance of pure worship from a devoted heart and make it your aim to show reverence and awe when you praise the Lord alongside His people.**

DAY 28

Matthew 22:34-40

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

When the Sadducees and Pharisees try to trap Jesus into promoting one law above another, Jesus silences their vigorous opposition by revealing that the foundation and reason behind Biblical law is love. The whole purpose we are here on earth is to love God with everything we are. “Love the Lord your God” is the declaration of humankind, saying God is our God and He is the only God. Thus, we will love Him with everything we are and with all we have – with our heart, which is our moral center, with our soul, which is the seat of our affection and will, and with our mind, which is where our thoughts and intellect live. From the same foundational love that we have for God flows the love we

“Love the
Lord your
God with all
your heart...”

MATTHEW 22:37

have for our neighbor and ourselves. Our love for others and ourselves is both the illustration and the evidence of our love for God and His unconditional love for us. When Jesus says to love your neighbor as yourself, he means that with the care and concern we have for our own interests, we should also care and have concern for the interests of others. From these two commands emerge all others. **If this is the core of Scripture, how are we acting upon it in our day-to-day lives? How do we intentionally love God? How do we intentionally love our neighbor and ourselves?**

DAY 29

Matthew 26:1-13

1 “When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, *2* “As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, *4* and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him.

5 “But not during the festival,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

6 While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, *7* a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

8 When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. *9* “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”

10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. 12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

How much is Jesus worth to you? In reading this story it seems that Jesus was worth everything to this woman who poured expensive perfume on his head. Jesus approved of her gesture and gave a response to his disciples that allows us to see they were missing the point of what happened. When we think of the things we have or own, we often just see them as ours. But what if we saw those things as resources to be used in order to help others see Jesus? The woman in this story used what may have been her only material possession to pour on the head of Jesus. She used what she had for Jesus. **How often do we use our resources for us and how often do we use them for Jesus?**

DAY 30

Matthew 26:14-16

14 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests 15 and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. 16 From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

There are many suspected motives for why Judas did what he did. Some believe he wanted Jesus to be a politically victorious Messiah and his intention was to force Jesus to show his power in this confrontation. Others think he didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah at all and wanted him killed. What we clearly see from scripture is he thought more of himself than he did of Jesus and he acted on greed.

The contemporary value of thirty pieces of silver is difficult to determine, but it was an undeniably small amount. Old Testament passages tell us this would have been a common price for the basest slave. Judas was willing to exchange Jesus for a small, fleeting reward.

Maybe it's easy for you to put Judas into a category that looks nothing like you. He was a sell-out, even after walking with Jesus for all that time. He had seen Jesus work miracles, heal the sick, preach to thousands, feed hundreds, calm the seas. And yet he decides to seek out a selfish reward and hand Jesus over to the chief priests.

This still happens every day. It just doesn't look like 30 pieces of silver. It's a much more subtle exchange today. Maybe in your life it looks like watching something that fills your thoughts with lust or desiring the possessions of others. It could be engaging in gossip or choosing a temporary pleasure when you know God has called it sin. Or it could be when you feel God prompting you to give of your time or resources to someone else and instead you keep that resource for yourself.

What subtle (even momentary) exchanges are we making in our lives that are replacing Jesus?

DAY 31

Matthew 26:17-30

17 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You have said so."

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

DAY 31 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 26:17-30

When I was a young boy, I had a dream. Like every other young whipper snapper, I wanted to own a BB gun. Oh, to feel the steel shaft under my palm. Working with the hands of a surgeon, putting each BB into the barrel of the gun! Well, because my parents were wonderful and because I was such a perfect kid... (well, let's move on!). My parents finally got me that BB gun. They said, "Be careful, be careful!" Let's cut to the chase. It wasn't one day later that I shot a hole in the front window! When my Dad came home from work, he asked me, "Who shot the window?" I said, "I don't know!" Wrong answer. Of course he knew it was me. He was looking for my confession.

In today's passage, Jesus knows the betrayer, but he still goes with him the Passover meal. It was the Last Supper and it

perfectly described the purpose of His death: to bring liars like us back into relationship with our Father. Even when we're not sorry, Jesus still died for us. Even when He knows our dark, hardened hearts, it doesn't sway His love for us. **It is a love that suffered for a world that wasn't sorry. That's what love does. That's how Jesus loves us. Let's love one another like that.**

By the way, my parents didn't disown me or remove me from the Sanford Archives, but I do think I lost the BB gun for a week or two. I can't blame them. Can you?

DAY 32

Matthew 26:36-46

36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. 41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because

their eyes were heavy. 44 So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

45 Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Jesus is getting ready to be betrayed by a friend, arrested, tortured, and eventually crucified on a cross. All of this happens because we deserved it, not Jesus. He is willing to take it all on for us. Do you notice what Jesus does when he is faced with a looming major life event? He prays. Here in Matthew 26 we see it three different times (v.36, 42, 44). Jesus goes off by himself to spend time crying out to the Father for the "cup" to be taken from him if it is God's desire. The wrath of God is coming on the cross for the sins of all people, including you and me. Jesus isn't anguished because he is worried about Roman soldiers. Rather, he is about to charge the hill and experience the divine wrath of God for the sins of all people. Jesus goes to the cross to endure the wrath that we deserve and the full "cup" of God's wrath poured out on His only son Jesus. Because of that, he has an honest time of prayer with the Father about what's to come. We see Jesus completely trust in God's desire for him. **Take some time today to be with Jesus. Praise him for willingly enduring all the wrath of God that we deserve so that we can experience the unconditional love and grace of God.**

DAY 33

Matthew 26:47-56

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." 49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

50 Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

55 In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?"

Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.

56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Even though Jesus was surrounded by a mob with swords and clubs, He was in total command. The mob thought they were arresting Jesus, when really Jesus was giving Himself up to them. Although Peter thought he was defending Jesus with a sword, he was really acting against the plan that had always been in place. Although Judas thought his plan succeeded, he later realized his plans were all wrong. Jesus was in complete command. As He said, more than twelve legions of angels were ready to answer His call. But that wasn't the plan. Jesus's hour had come, and He knew it. He was faithfully and obediently stepping into darkness so that we might be able to step into the light. **Think about this: we serve the One who is in total command. Today, no matter what opposition we face, are we willing to obediently and faithfully step forward into that which God is calling us?**

DAY 34

Matthew 26:69-75

69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

70 But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

72 He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

74 Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

Immediately a rooster crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

There are few moments in Scripture better than the one above that give us a better picture of just how short we fall to reciprocate

the love God has for us. Peter was one of the twelve disciples who walked closest with Jesus. He saw Jesus open the eyes of the blind, make a lame man walk, teach, love and raise the dead to life. Jesus even sustained Peter's faith as he walked on water. Peter was the first person to rightly identify Jesus as the Son of God. But in this moment shortly after telling Jesus he would rather die for him than deny him, Peter denies Jesus three times.

While Peter denies Jesus, Jesus is preparing to pay the ultimate price for sin. Giving up his perfect life on the cross—the ultimate picture of love. Our lives are filled with moments of failing Jesus but finding a God who loves us enough to offer mercy and grace through the sacrifice of his Son.

After Peter's denial, he bitterly weeps at what he has done. In the book of John after Peter denies Jesus, he returns to fishing (what he knew before following Jesus). I believe he went there because he thought there was no way of coming back after he failed Jesus so badly. But Jesus redeemed him and told him to show his love by "feeding sheep" or caring for people. Thankfully, God's love is big enough and strong enough to endure our failed attempts to love Him back. God's love is also big enough to redeem us and to use us. **Take a moment and thank Jesus for loving us despite our lack of love and commitment to him. How do you respond to this kind of love amidst your failures?**

DAY 35

Mathew 27:11-26

11 Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

12 When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. 13 Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” 14 But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

15 Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. 16 At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. 17 So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” 18 For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

19 While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask

for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

21 "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered.

22 "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked.

They all answered, "Crucify him!"

23 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

25 All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!"

26 Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

DAY 35 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 27:11-26

This is one of the most singularly amazing bits of theatre in all of the Bible.

Pilate, the Roman Governor, and the Jews hated each other. Yet, they dance this strange dance of hated political friendship. Pilate doesn't want to give them anything they want, but he must keep the peace. The Jews don't want Jesus to slip out of their hands, so they must act like they respect Pilate.

Jesus remains silent and in control as he does all the way through this tragic movement of grace. He is the only one who does not react out of fear or jealousy. Jesus's path is determined by God's will and his love for us.

Jesus is silent, but in control. He is Lord in his submission to the will of God and in the face of the hateful actions of his

enemies! He will not be goaded into saving or protecting himself, but dies for us — for you and me.

We should marvel at his restraint and grace. How he could let this happen is beyond our comprehension, but at the same time, we should thank him. Thank him for showing us that we can be self-controlled when we fully submit to our Father's will. Jesus shows us there are bigger things than ridicule and death. This story doesn't end with Pilate, an angry mob or a crucifixion. Jesus is raised from the dead and sits as our triumphant Lord until he returns to take us home! **In what areas of your life do you struggle to display self-control? How can fully submitting to God's will for your life aid in that struggle?**

DAY 36

Matthew 27:27-31

27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.

28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. 30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

When the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium (governor's house), they gathered the whole garrison, approximately six hundred soldiers, to surround Jesus. Why? They didn't fear Jesus escaping or the disciples rising up to rescue him. Why would they pull soldiers from their posts and pack them into this area? Romans, like the Jews and Greeks and all other peoples, wanted to bear witness to things with their own eyes. Romans fully understood the

power of a crowd and the power of public perception, as seen in their utilization of arenas and the Colosseum in Rome. It is in public, not private, that humiliation and mockery thrive. The Roman soldiers delighted in their mockery of Jesus's kingship, all the while not realizing they were crowning the Son of God with his first crown and covering him with his first robe. Unbeknownst to them, they were kneeling before the Christ and they were hailing him as king who is in fact the King of Kings. In the very echo of their mockery was the truth. The parade of humiliation poured out on Jesus was carried out by the very ones he came to save. And within the darkest moments of Christ's life, humiliation was met with humility, and mockery was met with mercy. Every soldier in that garrison was an instrument in the crucifixion and also a witness to the unfolding truth. **In our own lives, where have we missed the truth and accepted the public or popular belief? What areas in our lives can we return Jesus to his rightful place as King of Kings?**

DAY 37

Matthew 27:32-44

32 As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”).

34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36 And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: this is jesus, the king of the jews.

38 Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” 41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42 “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

43 He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' 44 In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

One question comes to mind in reading this story. Are we spectators or are we participants? Do we stand back and watch Jesus work from a distance or do we actively participate in the work of Jesus in our daily lives? Jesus's death on the cross demands a response from us. This season of Lent is meant to be a time of sacrifice. We see in this scripture that Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for us to have our sins forgiven. When we think about how we can participate in the work of Jesus, He calls us to give up our own life. Jesus calls us to die to ourselves. **We are to give up our own desires for the desires of Jesus. Are you a spectator or a participant?**

DAY 38

Mathew 27:45-66

45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lemasabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split 52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

55 Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

57 As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

DAY 38 (CONTINUED)

Mathew 27:45-66

God covers the earth with darkness while Jesus takes on the sin of the world. Not only is he in excruciating pain, enduring one of the most painful executions the Roman Empire could give, but he cries out in complete separation from his Father. The physical state he is in and the pressure on his lungs is so great, speaking at all must have been difficult, much less crying out to God.

Jesus quotes Psalm 22, a Psalm of David, which prophesied many events that happened during the crucifixion. He asks God why he's been forsaken. For the first time in his life, he feels cut off from the favor and fellowship of God as he takes on the sins of the whole world.

Then at the ninth hour, around three in the afternoon, he gives up his spirit. It's important to note that at the ninth hour the Jews would offer a daily evening sacrifice. The curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place of the

Temple, an area that only the High Priest was allowed to enter on the Day of Atonement once a year, suddenly tore itself in two from the top to bottom. There is no longer separation between God and His people. All of this symbolism is God's way of showing us that Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice.

Jesus's suffering was great, and his sacrifice was final. He took on sin in its entirety and left nothing out. Our sin brings us shame as we feel that separation, the fellowship with God temporarily broken, but we bear none of the weight of the sacrifice. Forgiveness is offered freely and living in sin or in shame from sin is rejecting all that Jesus endured on the cross. When I take on that burden, I act as though I have to do more, and Jesus's sacrifice was not enough.

Today, remember the suffering that Jesus endured on the cross and thank him for his sacrifice and forgiveness of sins.

DAY 39

Matthew 28:1-15

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. *3* His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. *4* The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. *6* He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. *7* Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled

with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."
The Guards' Report

11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,

13 telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

DAY 39 (CONTINUED)

Matthew 28:1-15

Some of the best childhood memories I have are of the holidays. I loved all of them. My wife and I still decorate the house for each one. Growing up, one tradition we had at Easter was to get up early in the morning and try to find our Easter baskets. They would be hidden around the house. It was exciting to search and search, knowing and hoping for what was at the end. A big surprise! Candy, toys and more candy!

I suppose on that first Easter morning when the women heard the news that Jesus was alive, they felt excited too. What a surprise for them! Jesus was dead, life was over, and now, He's alive! This was a game changer. It confirmed everything about His life. The "Easter Basket" of their faith was full of the sweetness of God and the gifts of his Spirit.

“He is
not here.
He has risen!”

MATTHEW 28:6

Oh, I wish I could have been there. What would I have said to Him? What promises would I have made to Him? The great news is we still can! **He’s alive! Right here in front of you. Give Him your heart and open your life to the One who conquered death. He loves you!** This is an exciting day full of surprises.

Of course, some in that day were told a lie that Jesus’s body was stolen and that He wasn’t really alive. Some people today still believe that lie. Believing that is as foolish as still believing in the Easter bunny! But then, as long as I keep getting a basket full of candy, I don’t care who gives it to me. **Happy Easter! Jesus is risen!**

DAY 40

Matthew 28:16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus is giving his final charge to his disciples and it is the same charge for us today. Jesus's charge is to "go" and to "make disciples." When Jesus tells them to "go," he isn't referring to a specific destination. The Greek word means "as you are going." It is one of three action words in v.19-20 and this one is an everyday command. As we go to work, school, gym, stay home, our friend's house, games, or anywhere else, we make disciples. What does it mean to "make disciples?"

“...go and
make
disciples of
all nations...”

MATTHEW 28:19

As we go about our day doing whatever it is that we do, make Jesus famous. He is calling us to live our lives alongside people who have no connection with him and people who already have a connection with him in order to help them grow in their relationship with the Father. Mark Moore says it this way in his book CORE 52, “Walk with people as you walk with Jesus. Before long, they’ll meet each other.” **As we finish our 40 days in the life of Jesus, who in your life needs to know him? Who needs to hear about what you have discovered from your time in his Word? Who needs to see the life transformation that has happened in your life because of your relationship with Jesus? In the words of Jesus, “Therefore, go...”**

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