

February 18– May 4, 2015

A Journey With Jesus



The Gospel of John

Developed by Pastor Kevin Austin and the Elders of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, February 2015.

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We come to the Journey

This year we are inviting you to go on an incredible journey with us. It is a journey that will be long. It will be a journey that at times will be fun, at times exciting, at times hard, at times fascinating, and at times confusing. It is a journey through the four Gospels as we venture into the life of Jesus.

We don't go on this journey alone, as the Holy Spirit has promised to be our guide, to be our teacher. We go on this journey together with one another as a church family.

As we go on this journey, we will be utilizing the three concepts that were introduced during the *Eat This Book* sermon series. Each day there will be a short section of the Bible to read, followed by something to do with *prayer, meditation, and testing*.

In *prayer*, we ask God to help us as we read, to be our teacher, to help us to understand, to speak to us, and then to help us take what we have learned and put into practice in our lives.

In *meditation*, there will be a question or an exercise that helps us after we have read the text to reenter the text, think about it, chew on it, process it in order that the message it gives might go from the page into us.

Finally, in *test*, we will spend some time pondering how what we have just read interacts with our lives, whether it is reflecting back on experiences we have had or thinking about how we can put these things into action in our thinking, speaking, and living.

We look forward to going on this journey with you as we grow in our knowledge of Jesus and his story, as we grow in our faith, as we together learn to follow him in our daily lives.

Pastor Kevin and The Elders of Shepherd of the Hills

John 1:1-13

Prayer- Today is the day known as Ash Wednesday, when we remember that “we are dust and to dust we shall return.” It is an entrance into the season of Lent. As you prepare to read, ask God to use Lent to help you grow in your faith and confess your sins as you remember your overwhelming need for God in your life.

Meditation- What point do you think that John is trying to make with his use of the words “light” and “darkness”?

Test- In the text, John’s emphasis is on the fact that Jesus always has “been”. How does this impact how you Jesus and live your life?

John 1:14-28

Prayer- Spend some time before and after reading asking God to open your eyes to see him in the word and the world around; to open your ears to clearly hear God’s voice; and to open your heart that you might be molded and shaped into the person that God would have you to be.

Meditation- What significance is John drawing on that Christ is God in the flesh? How does this make all the difference in the world for John the Baptist’s view of Jesus?

Test- How can you, in your life, point to Christ the same way that John the Baptist did?

John 1:29-42

Prayer- Before you read, pray this prayer: "God, source of all light, by your Word you give light to the soul. Pour out upon us the spirit of wisdom and understanding that, being taught by you in Holy Scripture, our hearts and minds may be opened to know the things that pertain to life and holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Meditation- What images is John drawing us to with the words "behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?"

Test- How is God calling you to "come and see" in your life?

John 1:43-51

Prayer- As you prepare for some time in God's Word, spend some time inviting God to come and work in you and ask him to help you to prepare to read and listen to His Word.

Meditation- Read the story again, this time from the perspective of Nathaniel. Put yourself in his shoes. What do you learn about Jesus? What shocks you? What impresses you? What can you take away from this encounter? What would he tell you today reading his story?

Test- In this passage, we hear the shock that the Christ would come from Nazareth. In life, we have times when we think we know what it takes for someone or something to be used by God. What are excuses in our lives that prevent us from responding to God's call because we somehow feel disqualified or insufficient?

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

John 2:1-12

Prayer- Even though we may not know how or when we are going to be called to do God's work, take a moment to pray for God's guidance to prepare for His calling.

Meditation- What was the purpose of the miracle? If you were one of Jesus' disciples, how would you have reacted to this first miracle?

Test- Mary asked Jesus to help when there was no wine. When have you come to God with a request for your life and the "hour has not yet come"?

John 2:13-25

Prayer- Before reading the text, think about all of the important earthly possessions that you have. Spend some time giving thanks for him for all of these amazing blessings and then ask God to help you to keep Him first in your life.

Meditation- What was Jesus so mad about? How was Jesus preparing his disciples for the resurrection?

Test- How have you, or how would you, respond to people making a mockery of your faith?

John 3:1-15

Prayer- Think about a current issue (or issues) that you find confusing, then spend some time asking God to help your understanding.

Meditation- Nicodemus seems confused; does Jesus let him flounder? How does Jesus help Nicodemus process his confusion?

Test- How can Jesus and God's Word help you sort through confusion in your own life?

John 3:16-21

Prayer- Pray this prayer, "God please help me to see your plan and help me and others to be part of it."

Meditation- What does this passage tell us about God's plan?

Test- What difference does it make in our lives and in how we see the world that God has a plan?

John 3:22-36

Prayer- As John the Baptist is baptizing those who wanted to be baptized, he remembered to put Jesus first, and to give Jesus the glory. Pray, asking God to help you put Him first in your daily life, and give him the glory instead of seeking it for yourself.

Meditation- What does John the Baptist mean when he says, "He must increase, but I must decrease?" Who is John talking about and why does he take that position?

Test- Look at your own life. How does the phrase: "a person cannot receive even one thing unless it comes from Heaven" challenge how we look at our own lives?

John 4:1-15

Prayer- The Samaritan woman asks if Jesus is greater than our father Jacob. Pray that we don't compare Jesus to earthly standards, but give him the praise and glory he deserves.

Meditation- Jesus talks about the "Living Water." Does the Samaritan woman understand what he means? What is Jesus referring to by these words? Which water would she choose? Which water would you choose?

Test- The water, the eternal life, is only possible through who? Who gives it to us? What other sources do we go to looking for life?

Saturday, February 28

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

Sunday, March 1

John 4:16-30

Prayer- Pray this prayer: "Lord, like the Samaritan woman in this passage, you know all of my sins. What I have done and what I have not done. Thank you for sending Jesus to take away the sins of the world, including mine. Amen."

Meditation- Before Jesus confirmed who he was, what else did he say that made the Samaritan woman suspect that he was the Messiah?

Test- Jesus is telling the Samaritan woman that worship is not required in a certain place like Jerusalem or the temple. It requires the Holy Spirit and the truth. How have you worshipped Christ outside of the church? Where would you like to try? How is our entire life an act of worship?

John 4:31-45

Prayer- Before reading the passage, ask God for understanding and wisdom. Pray for His guidance to show you how you can reap what Jesus Christ has sown.

Meditation- Many believed in Jesus because of what the Samaritan woman was saying. What do you think the Samaritan woman said to them to make such a strong impression? Who in your life introduced you to Jesus?

Test- Jesus says that he feeds on "doing the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." How can we do the same in our lives today? What would that look like in your life?

John 4:46-54

Wednesday, March 4

Prayer- Pray this prayer after reading the text: "Lord so often our faith is put to the test. Please help us to be more like the official in Galilee who believed in your Word without seeing any signs or miracles."

Meditation- The official believed that for his son to be healed, Jesus had to be present. Why do you think he thought that? What made him believe Jesus?

Test- What miraculous signs have occurred in your life that you initially thought were good fortune? How quick were you to give praise to God for it?

John 5:1-17

Thursday, March 5

Prayer- Read verses 1-9. Come to God in prayer and ask Him for this miracle to resonate in your memory whenever things seem lost or hopeless, knowing that he has the power to change everything for the better. Continue reading the passage.

Meditation- What does Jesus tell the man after he has been healed? Why is it important?

Test- The Jews were upset because Jesus was working on the Sabbath. When have you ever felt like taking a "Sabbath" from doing God's work? How can you prevent it?

John 5:18-29

Prayer- Before reading the passage, ask God for wisdom. So that we can understand His incredible grace of sending his Son, Jesus Christ, and giving all authority on heaven and earth to him so that we might have eternal life.

Meditation- Where in the text does Jesus confirm that the only way to be saved is through him? Why is this such a big deal in the context of the story? Why is this such a big deal in the context of your story?

Test- Remember this passage and read it again the next time you feel you don't deserve God's grace. How can a passage like this lift you up?

John 5:30-47

Prayer- Take a time of silent reflection. Think of all the people in your life who do not know that Jesus is the Son of God. Pray that they might come to Christ.

Meditation- Jesus mentions 4 witnesses that confirm his claim that he is the Son of God. Who or what are they?

Test- Think about a time in your life that you had to defend your faith to someone. How do you go about defending your faith? How might this passage help?

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

Sunday, March 8

John 6:1-15

Prayer- As Jesus prepares to feed the five thousand, let us pray for God to help you remember that God can do anything and is not limited as human understanding is limited. Ask for help in opening your heart and mind to God's Word this week.

Meditation- What do you think Andrew expected Jesus to do when he offered him the boy's bread and fish?

Test- Even after the miracle feeding, why did Jesus feel the need to withdraw to the mountain by himself? How can we take a cue from Jesus in this respect in our own lives?

Monday, March 9

John 6:16-24

Prayer- As we read about Jesus walking on water, pray that God would help us and give us the strength to get through difficult times where we are unsure if we can make it through on our own.

Meditation- How would you react if you saw someone walking across the water toward your boat? Would you be scared like the disciples?

Test- If you heard Jesus say "It is I. Do not be afraid." How would you react? Would you still be scared? Why or why not? How in your life do you deal with fear?

John 6:25-40

Prayer- Please pray this prayer: "Dear God, please help me to turn to you in good times and in rough times. Lord, you are the bread of life. Help me to look to you daily to renew guidance towards your path. Amen."

Meditation- Jesus says he is the "Bread of Life". If you were the man he was speaking to, would you have understood what he meant? What did Jesus mean by this?

Test- Did Jesus come to the world to save us of his own will? Explain. How can we learn from Jesus what it means to be obedient to the will of God?

John 6:41-59

Prayer- Please pray this prayer: "Dear Heavenly Father, help me to see you in all your Glory, and not see you in my flawed and limited world view. Amen."

Meditation- If you were talking with the Jews discussing Jesus saying he was giving us his flesh to eat, how do you think that conversation went? What would others be saying?

Test- Jesus says "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink." What does that mean for you and me in our lives today?

Thursday, March 12

John 6:60-71

Prayer- As we read this section, God knows all of our flaws and our sins, but still chooses us to be his. Say a prayer of thanks to God for choosing us despite our sins, and for his unconditional love for us.

Meditation- Why did many of Jesus' disciples turn back when Jesus told them that "no one can come to me unless it is granted by the father"?

Test- Jesus chose the twelve disciples, knowing that one of them would betray him. Can you imagine how difficult this would be? What are things that you have seen that have caused people to turn back from Jesus in their own lives?

Friday, March 13

John 7:1-13

Prayer- Please pray this prayer: "Dear Lord, please help me to find patience and comfort and know that you work in your time. Give me the strength to not try to fit my agenda into your plans. Amen."

Meditation- Even some of Jesus' followers doubted him and wanted Jesus to prove his might to the world. Have you ever questioned why God does not always demonstrate his might and intervention?

Test- Jesus stated "my time has not yet fully come." How hard do you think being patient is for Jesus, as he knows everything he can do, but he also knows everything that lies ahead of him? How do you deal with things not happening on your time schedule in life?

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

John 7:14-24

Prayer- Ask God to prepare your heart as you start to study God's Word and prepare to start your work or school week.

Meditation- A diplomat sent to a foreign land has been given authority to act on government business. Who has given Jesus authority and whose work is he carrying out?

Test- What authority does Jesus have and how does that make the advice he gives more believable? How does this authority impact the way that we live today as followers of Jesus?

Monday, March 16

John 7:25-39

Prayer- Say this prayer to God: "God, sometimes things are confusing. Clear my mind so I can see the hints that Jesus is giving, for it is in Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Meditation- Have you tried to explain something by dropping hints or using word pictures without explaining every little detail? Watch how Jesus is talking about going to heaven without saying it directly. How well does the crowd get the subtle message?

Test- What is the living water that Jesus offers? How can that nourish my life like water nourishes a garden?

Tuesday, March 17

John 7:40-52

Prayer- Thank God for a time you understood something that left others confused.

Meditation- The religious leaders fully expected that the Messiah would have to come from one city and, as a result, refused to believe Jesus was a prophet because he came from someplace else. What is the one piece of information they didn't understand that means they should have been paying more attention to Jesus?

Test- If the other parts of the Bible can clear up this confusion about where Jesus came from, how else could the Bible clear up confusion you are feeling?

John 8:1-11

Prayer- Say this prayer to God – "God, I want to be more like Jesus. Help me move away from my hurtful ways of thinking and toward the attitudes that Jesus shows. In His name I pray, Amen."

Meditation- Recall a time you saw someone gently change the attitude of some people who were thinking wrongly. How did the person change the direction of the discussion or improve the mood of a group? How does Jesus calm a mob and then brings forgiveness into a messy situation?

Test- If Jesus can change the hard hearts of a mean-spirited crowd, how could the Bible take a rough edge off of your life?

John 8:12-30

Prayer- Thank God for a time you understood so clearly what you should do in a situation that it seemed like a spotlight was shining on your path.

Meditation- Jesus uses several word pictures, the first one is an illustration of light and dark. What do these illustrations reveal to us about Jesus?

Test- How can the light of the world revealed in the Bible provide clarity for the struggles you face in your life?

John 8:31-47

Prayer- Ask God to help you see the cause of the conflict in this reading and how this text applies in your own life.

Meditation- The religious leaders are upset with Jesus. What are their complaints about Jesus and what are his responses? Read again paying special attention to how he responds to their protests. What does he say is at the core of their conflict with him?

Test- How has the truth Jesus declared set you free? How can the truth of the Bible set you free in more areas of your life?

Sunday, March 22

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

John 8:48-59

Prayer- When you read this passage remember who Jesus is - The Father, Son & Holy Spirit. As Jesus said before you were born, "I am". Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to more fully grasp who God is and the nature of God.

Meditation- What does Jesus mean when he says, "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death"?

Test- How does the Lord's word keep you going when times get hard or you feel that you are at your wits end?

Monday, March 23

John 9:1-12

Prayer- Pray this Prayer: "Lord God heavenly Father, we know that through you all things are possible, you know our hearts, give us the grace to receive this through you. Amen."

Meditation- Jesus said, "while I am in this world, I am the light of the world." What did he mean by this and how does it affect your daily walk with the Lord?

Test- How do you feel when you are facing a challenge and you give it up to the Lord? How can God and your faith in him help you to face those challenges?

Tuesday, March 24

John 9:13-23

Prayer- "Lord God, Heavenly Father, I know that through you all things are possible. As I read today help me to grow in view of you and what you are capable of in my life. Open my eyes that I may see you not only in the text but in the world around me. Amen."

Meditation- Why do you think the Pharisees could not believe that Jesus could heal the blind man?

Test- What are some times in your life that it was hard to think that the Lord could answer your prayers? How have these moments shaped your faith in God?

Wednesday, March 25

John 9:24-41

Prayer– Before you read pray: “Prepare my heart, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in me any voice but your own, that, hearing, I may also obey your will; though Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Meditation- When Jesus said, “I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind,” what did he mean by this?

Test- Think about it, have you met people who say they are Christians or have had a Christian upbringing but do not practice what they claim. How do you feel about this?

John 10:1-21

Prayer– Pray this prayer: “Jesus, I pray as a member of your flock, that you would help me to come back over and over again to the gate that you have opened for me and others, as we await that day when we all will be together. Amen.”

Meditation- Jesus said that he is the Shepherd and we are his sheep and he will lay down his life for his sheep. What did he mean by this?

Test- As the sheep of the good Shepherd, how has the gate Jesus opened affected your daily walk with him?

John 10: 22-41

Prayer- "Lord, I am thankful that I believe in you, knowing that through you and the Father and the Holy Spirit all things are possible. Amen."

Meditation- Why do you think the Jews would not believe the miracles that Jesus did?

Test- How do the miracles you have read in the Bible strengthen your faith in the Lord? In what ways do you struggle with the work of God like the Jews in the story?

Saturday, March 28

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

Spend some time reflecting upon the events of the first Palm Sunday and preparing for the week that is ahead.

Palm Sunday, March 29

John 11:1-16

Prayer– Before you read pray: “Lord, Help me to understand that all circumstances exist that You and your Son may be glorified. Amen.”

Meditation- As foretold by Jesus, what impact was Lazarus’ death going to have on Lazarus, the disciples, God/Jesus ?

Test- How can God use our specific circumstances within our life to help us grow in our faith?

John 11:17-27

Prayer– As you prepare to read today spend some time praying and reflecting on these words from the Lord’s Prayer: “give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses.”

Meditation- In this passage Martha and Mary seem concerned on one hand with a literal physical resurrection and a spiritual one on the other. How did Jesus answer their fears? What did Jesus reveal about himself that they didn’t already know?

Test- How is your prayer life influenced by understanding that God has power over both body and soul?

John 11:28-44

Prayer- Before you read pray: "Jesus, may our compassion towards humanity increase and may you be glorified in it. "

Meditation- Lazarus was entombed by the time of Jesus visit. What was Jesus' response to Martha, Mary, and the Jews upon seeing their grief? What does this response teach us about Jesus?

Test- How has God's compassion toward you resulted in God being glorified? How has compassion for others ever driven you to action?

John 11:45-57

Prayer- Pray before you read asking the Father to show you what it means to be a disciple of Christ through this year's celebration of Easter.

Meditation- The resurrection of Lazarus had a different effect on the most religious people of the day. Why would the most religious of people seek an arrest warrant for Jesus? How is the reaction of the religious people different than the reaction of the disciples?

Test- What are ways that we might inhibit God's work and "arrest" the work of Jesus in our own lives, church, or others?

John 12:1-11

Prayer– Spend some time thanking God for your baptism; the moment in time in which God publicly called you His own and brought you into his family. Ask God to help you to live out your baptism every day.

Meditation- Lazarus, Martha and Judas, were some of those who were in the “company” of Jesus. What do these very different people teach us about being followers of Jesus?

Test- Of the three Lazarus, Martha, and Judas, who do you think was most thankful to be seated at the gathering for Jesus ? In what ways do you identify with each?

John 12:12-19

Prayer– Before and after you read today, pray this simple prayer: “Lord help me covet the scripture which reveals you and your goodness to us.”

Meditation- Why did crowds come to see Jesus enter Jerusalem? Did a lack of knowing Jesus’ identity prevent them from wanting to see Him?

Test- How can the Scriptures be used as a metaphor for Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem?

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

Spend some time reflecting upon the events of the first Easter, the greatness of the celebration, and what Easter means for us.

John 12:20-36

Prayer– Before you read pray: “God help me to glorify you to others in all that I do in my daily walk with you. Amen.”

Meditation– Jesus is talking about being lifted up. What does it mean for Jesus to be glorified?

Test– How do you glorify God in your daily walk with Him?

John 12:37-50

Prayer– Read the passage and reflect on what your belief in God is. Reread the passage and pray for God to strengthen your faith in Him.

Meditation– Why did some of the Pharisees hide their belief in Jesus?

Test– Do we hide our belief in God when we are with non-believers? What do you do to outwardly show people of your belief?

John 13:1-20

Prayer– Before you read today, pray this simple prayer: “God please help me to help and be a servant to others. Amen.”

Meditation– Why does Jesus wash the disciples’ feet? Why do you think Jesus commands the disciples to follow his example? What is Jesus teaching the disciples through this experience?

Test– How have you followed Jesus’ example of servitude? How can you follow his example today?

John 13:21-30

Prayer– Before you read pray: “God help me to understand your words and help me to not betray you. Fill me with your Spirit. Amen.”

Meditation– Prophecies say that someone will betray Jesus. Does Jesus know who that is? How does Jesus treat this person?

Test– How are you like Judas? How do you betray Jesus?

John 13:31-38

Prayer– Read the passage then pray: “God give me the strength to follow your commandments. Help me to love you and love my neighbor as myself. Amen.”

Meditation– What is the new commandment that Jesus gives? How is this commandment not so new but actually old? Does Peter believe that he could deny Jesus?

Test– How have you denied Jesus?

John 14:1-14

Prayer– Before you read the passage pray: “God help me to understand you and not to have a troubled heart. When I struggle, help me to look to you and the hope that you offer. Amen.”

Meditation– What does Jesus mean when he says, “I am the way and the truth and the life”?

Test– How does Jesus’ words that he is going to prepare a place in His Father’s house give us comfort?

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

John 14:15-31

Prayer– Spend some time praying and giving God the things that are going through your heart and mind. Give thanks for the joys in life and ask for help in the struggles. Ask God to help you today and over the following week to grow and learn from the things you will read.

Meditation– What does this passage teach us about the Father? What does this passage teach us about Jesus? What does this passage teach us about the Holy Spirit?

Test– What are ways in which you have seen the Holy Spirit actively working in your life? What difference does it make in your perspective on obedience to hear that obedience flows from our love for God?

John 15:1-11

Prayer– Before you read pray: “Living God, help me so to hear your holy Word that I may truly understand; that, understanding, I may believe, and believing, I may follow in all faithfulness and obedience, seeking your honor and glory in all that I do; through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Meditation– What is the main point that Jesus is making about how life is supposed to be lived through this metaphor?

Test– In verse 1, Jesus says that he is the “true” vine. What are some false vines that we try to connect to, seeking life?

John 15:12-17

Prayer– Spend some time preparing to read the Bible by asking for God’s help in not only the time you spend in the Bible but throughout the rest of your day as you seek to live what you read.

Meditation– What is Jesus saying in these words about our relationship to him?

Test– Spend some time reflecting upon the picture of love that Jesus paints in these words and with his life. Write down a definition of love that is exemplified in the life of Christ. How can you love with this kind of love?

John 15:18-27

Prayer– Spend some time giving God the things in your life that have been or are hard for you. Ask for his guidance as you read to help you to receive a new perspective on these things.

Meditation– What perspective does Jesus give us on suffering and bad days in this text?

Test– Who is someone that you have seen go through remarkably bad circumstance that has inspired you? How can you be an encouragement to them?

John 16:1-15

Prayer– Pray, asking God to help you to see and understand the things that you are ready to understand.

Meditation– Go back and reread verses 12-13. What do these verses teach us about the work of the Holy Spirit and faith? How do these verses relate to what Moses says in Deuteronomy 29:29?

Test– What role does knowledge play in your faith life? Who are the people or what are the situations that have taught you the most?

John 16:16-33

Prayer– Pray this prayer before and after you read the passage: “May your Spirit, O Christ, lead me in the right way, keeping me safe from all forces of evil and destruction. And, free from all malice, may I search diligently in your Holy Word to discover with the eyes of my mind your commandments. Finally, give me the strength of will to put those commandments into practice through all the days of my life. Amen.”

Meditation– What is the source of peace that Christ offers?

Test- How does the peace of Christ transcend all understanding and help us to face the joys and struggles of life?

Sunday, April 19

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

John 17:1-5

Prayer- Read the passage first, then say this prayer: "Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sins. Thank you for giving him authority over all earthly things. It is by His sacrifice on the cross that I am saved and have eternal life. Amen." Read the passage again then spend some time prayerfully reflecting over these words.

Meditation- What does Jesus say that makes us know that He is not just a man but actually God himself?

Test- What work has God called you to do? How can you glorify God by accomplishing it?

Monday, April 20

John 17:6-19

Prayer- Pray this prayer. "Sometimes I wonder why you even love me, and why you ever chose to call me your child? Then I remember, it's by your sacrifice. I can say that I am yours and you are mine. Amen."

Meditation- Why is it so important that Jesus taught the disciples so much before his death?

Test- Jesus knew how his ministry would end, yet he still glorified God in everything he did. How does that give you strength to glorify God every time a hardship happens in your life?

John 17:20-26

Prayer- Take a moment to pray for the unbelievers of this world. Pray that they may get to know about Christ and his love for them. Pray that God may use you to share his message of grace and love with others.

Meditation- Re-read this passage knowing that every time Jesus refers to "they" or "them" and is talking about those who have not yet come to believe that he is referring to you directly. What does it tell us about Jesus that he was praying for you before He died? Before you were ever born?

Test- Why is it so important that you know the Bible and what Jesus has done for us?

John 18:1-11

Prayer- Spend some time in thought. Think about the importance of Jesus being willing to give himself over to Pharisees even though all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him. And, even though Peter physically tried to stop the Pharisees, why was it so important for Jesus to go willingly? After a few moments of pondering this, pray to God whatever is on your heart.

Meditation- How does Jesus respond to Peter's actions? What is Jesus talking about?

Test- In the midst of being taken away, Jesus still shows concern for his disciples' safety. When in your life have you done the same for others? How can you show this same concern for others today?

John 18:12-27

Prayer- Come to God in prayer today asking for his strength in difficult times. It's easy to deny Jesus in stressful situations. Ask that God be with you when trials and hardships occur in your life. Ask for his forgiveness when you have failed.

Meditation- How does Jesus respond when being questioned? How does he respond when he is struck by an officer? Now read Matthew 5:38-42. How does this story give new meaning and significance to the words of Jesus from Matthew 5

Test- Peter's first denial was to a servant girl, someone who had no authority to hurt or arrest him for his response, yet he still denied knowing Jesus. Has there been a time in your life that you can relate? What pressures do you face that could have a negative impact on your faith?

John 18:28-40

Saturday, April 25

Prayer- Before reading today's scripture, ask God to open your heart and mind so that you may fully understand the words that Jesus spoke to Pilate.

Meditation- Pilate tries to release Jesus several times before handing him over to the Pharisees. How many times does he try in this passage alone? Who do you think that Pilate wanted to get rid of Jesus so badly?

Test- Jesus says, "I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Since the Bible is God's word, and God's word is the truth, how will you respond when you read scripture that you don't agree with?

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

Sunday, April 26

John 19:1-16

Prayer- Talk to God about how important your loved ones are to you. Ask God to give you strength and wisdom to care for those you love.

Meditation- If you calmly walk up to a police officer and punch him in the face, you have no grounds to complain if you are immediately on the receiving end of a forceful physical response. On the other hand, if you get beat up by Roman soldiers for no reason, you are on the receiving end of injustice. How many types of verbal and physical injustice can you identify in these verses?

Test- The Bible tells us that Jesus went through suffering so that we can be with Him in Heaven forever. What does this say about your value to God if Jesus was willing to suffer that injustice to pay for your sins?

John 19:17-37

Prayer- Ask God to help you see that the crucifixion was not an accident, or mishap, or just a lousy week that got out of control.

Meditation- There are a number of verses in the Bible that predict what happened on that terrible day we call Good Friday. Look at verses 36 and 27, then read verses 17 to 37 again looking for things that were predicted by the Old Testament.

Test- What impact does it have on how we view life to know that the crucifixion was planned by God many centuries before it took place?

John 19:38-42

Prayer- Tell God about a time you lost someone you love. Tell God again how much that hurt. Then ask God to ease your pain from that loss.

Meditation- Jesus was dead. Wasn't in a coma. Not just unconscious a few hours. In addition to closing Jesus' body in a tomb, what things can you see in these verses that show he was dead dead?

Test- Joseph, Nicodemus, Jesus' mother, and all the disciples had no idea of the good news that we sang about this past Sunday. That was in their future when we read these verses. Ponder what they felt on Friday night and all day Saturday while in their confusion they thought about the horrible injustice of it all.

John 20:1-18

Prayer- Say this prayer: "God, I want to know you better. Reveal more and more of your truth as I am able to grow and understand more. In Jesus name, Amen."

Meditation- The wonderful news of the resurrection is slowly hinted to one, then two, then revealed in full to Mary, who shares that news with more. Reread the verses looking for the way the good news is slowly revealed. What stands out to you from the way this story was told?

Test- Have you seen God show you a little bit more of His truth in the Bible as you are able to understand a little bit more? Why do you suppose God would reveal himself to you a bit at a time?

John 20:19-31

Prayer- Ask God to help you understand things in the Bible that ought to make sense but just don't. Ask God to use the Bible to explain those issues.

Meditation- Thomas is so skeptical of what the disciples shared. Their story didn't make sense. He just couldn't believe it. How did Thomas respond to what Jesus did and said? How could that be an example for us? How did Jesus respond to Thomas?

Test- Think of something you've read in the Bible that you have trouble coming to terms with. How could the Bible help you sort through that confusion?

John 21:1-14

Prayer- Say this prayer: "God, let me see you moving in my life and the lives of my loved ones and those around me. May I experience joy at knowing you are alive and active. In Jesus name, Amen."

Meditation- Fishermen know water and fish. They know how to read the water and know when the fish haven't been around all night. They also know that the Romans are really good at killing people. They also know dead people stay dead. How many things can you see in these verses that are just completely contrary to the way they know things work?

Test- Amazing things happen when the risen Jesus is around. Fish at the surface who have been hiding all night, an extra large haul their nets are designed to handle, and Jesus being alive and appearing at the shore are so unexpected and wonderful. What other things have you seen in your life and in the Bible where God has done surprising and comforting and wonderful things?

Review and reflect upon all you have read and heard this week.

Sunday, May 3

John 21:15-25

Prayer- Prayer these words of Psalm 119 before and after you read the text: "In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways, I will delight in your statutes, I will not forget your word," (*Psalm 119:14-16*).

Meditation- After hearing a betrayer (later to be identified as Judas) was in their midst, Peter inquires as to the identity of said betrayer. Peter makes some big promises and then in the heat of the moment breaks those promises by denying Jesus three times. How does Jesus respond to Peter after all of this?

Test- Are we often more concerned about the hypocrisy of others while ignoring our own? What do Christ's words to Peter say to us?

Monday, May 4

UpNext

The Gospel of Mark



Connecting people to Christ, Others, and the World

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