

## SUNDAY

*April 17, 2011*

**READ:** Matthew 6:19-24; Matthew 25:31-46

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** As you read through these passages, look for words and thoughts that are motivators for specific action. What are they? What are they seeking to accomplish?

**KEY CONCEPT:** Motivation for lifestyle modification can (and should) be based on desiring to honor God just because it's the right thing to do. God also has given us promises that we will benefit in heaven for sacrificial lifestyle choices that extend His love while we are living our mortal lives...as well as suffer the consequences for living a self-serving lifestyle.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** When facing decisions, do you respond better to a carrot being dangled out in front of you, or the threat of a stick coming up behind you? How do you experience carrot/stick motivation in your life (at work, at home, etc.)? How do those motivators translate into how God helps to motivate us in our lives? Are they effective in helping you to do the right things...make the right choices?

**PRAY:** Life is not simple. It is full of decisions that we must make, each with its consequences both positive or negative. Ask God today for His help in clarifying your vision and understanding in each circumstance where you must make a decision. Ask Him to help you make God-honoring choices with your life that will build treasure in heaven.

## MONDAY

*April 18, 2011*

**READ:** Revelation 20: 11-15; Revelation 21: 1-5; Romans 10:9-13

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** What are the locations mentioned in the two passages from Revelation? What does it take to have your name recorded in the Book of Life?

**KEY CONCEPT:** Heaven and hell are real destinations. Every person who has ever lived is destined for one of them. The Romans passage reveals the key, and shows us that what we believe about Jesus is important in the determination of what road we are on.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** What do you believe about these three passages? Are they accurate and a representation of reality? If so, how has that information affected your faith journey? How do you feel about the coming judgment? Safe and secure? Concerned? Fearful? If you are not feeling secure in God's sight, what can you do that will change that situation?

**PRAY:** In John 1:9-13 and Galatians 3:26-27 we learn that we become children of God through our faith in Jesus Christ. God is looking forward to welcoming His children into heaven at the conclusion of their natural lives. If you have not yet made a decision to trust in Jesus for your salvation, ask God today to help you with that process. Don't just proclaim this in order to check it off a to-do list. Rather allow the Lord to open your heart to authentically trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

## TUESDAY

*April 19, 2011*

**READ:** Luke 12:1-12; Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:28-29; Acts 1:7-8

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** As you read the passages for today, reflect on the meaning of these words "publicly acknowledges me before others," "go and make disciples," "We proclaim him," "you will be my witnesses." What are all these phrases encouraging the reader to do?

**KEY CONCEPT:** Contrary to the teaching that faith is to be a private affair, Jesus expects His followers to share the good news (or gospel) of himself with others. It is literally a matter of life and death.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** If you were to see a person who is dying of thirst and hunger and knew where they could get food and drink, would you tell them? If you know someone who has not yet placed their faith in Jesus, and know the consequences for those who die apart from Christ, are you motivated to share your faith with them? Why or why not? What keeps people from taking the time to share Jesus with others? Are you motivated to help others come to know Jesus by the realization of what the Bible says about this subject?

**PRAY:** One of our greatest privileges in life is to help introduce people to Jesus. When we see the joy of someone who has made that discovery...a discovery that not only secures their salvation but brings the love of Christ into their hearts here and now...it blesses our own heart to have been a part of that process. If you are reluctant to share Jesus with others, ask God to help you get past this hurdle that hides the Truth from them. Ask Him to give you specific people with whom you can begin to open your heart and share his Good News!

## WEDNESDAY

*April 20, 2011*

**READ:** Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-25; Romans 5:6-8

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** How would you define "faith" and "works?" What is the role of faith and works within the context of our relationship with God? How are we saved from our sin...by faith alone? Works alone?

**KEY CONCEPT:** We cannot earn our salvation by works, or else Jesus' death for us would have been in vain (Romans 5:6-8). However our good works are a manifestation of our thanksgiving for what God has done for us through His grace which we receive by faith.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** How does knowing that Jesus went to the cross for your sin affect how you live your life in response to His amazing grace given to you? Have you been about doing "the good things he planned for us long ago?" Have you allowed the Holy Spirit to direct your life...the things you say and the things you do? Do you have joy in serving God, or is it more of a feeling of duty? Do you think there is a difference in what the motivation is for serving Him?

**PRAY:** If you are not feeling any joy in serving God, perhaps you are not serving where your spiritual gifts make it a good fit or in an area where you lack a passion. Lift this dryness up to the Lord and ask for Him to help you find how you can serve him out of your passion and giftedness. Consider talking to Carrie Piccinini (our service director) at the Service Outlet about what opportunities are currently available.

## THURSDAY

April 21, 2011

**READ:** James 1:2-4; Romans 5:1-5; Romans 12:1-2, 9-21; Luke 6:22-23

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** As you read these passages, note how people of faith in Jesus are to live above our circumstances. Take note of how we are to deal with adversity and adversaries. What does God's love look like in action when lived out in our lives?

**KEY CONCEPT:** Anticipating heaven doesn't eliminate pain, but it lessens it and puts it in perspective. Don't place your hope in favorable circumstances, which cannot and will not last. The transforming power of God in us, through the Holy Spirit, brings an entirely new way of facing the challenges of life. If we have eternity in clear view, the Lord enables us to live victoriously through whatever life brings our way.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** How does your faith impact the way you are able to ride the waves of life? Can you picture yourself living according to Romans 5 & 12? If not, do you think that it is possible to follow Paul's instruction to us in this manner? Can you see one area in your life where you might apply this teaching as a way of beginning to let the Holy Spirit bring peace to troubled waters?

**PRAY:** These teachings may look like James and Paul are telling us to wear rose colored glasses when looking at the world. They are not. We are to appropriate the power of God to help us surmount the waves rather than being sunk by them. Remember that Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He may not calm your rough seas, but if you ask Him in faith, He will be with you through those times, providing hope, encouragement, and evidence of His love in a number of ways. Open your heart fully to Him. Listen for His voice. Obey His directions. Praise His loving faithfulness to His children.

## FRIDAY

April 22, 2011

**READ:** Matthew 26 & 27

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** What is the setting for these chapters. By the end of the reading, where is Jesus? How did the disciples respond to the crisis? What is the hope that the disciples have at this point (prior to chapter 28)?

**KEY CONCEPT:** On Good Friday and Holy Saturday we take time to contemplate the crucifixion of our Lord and his time in the tomb. We consider our role, as sinners, in that act of His incredible love for us. We await the joy and promise of the resurrection.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** Do you take time to be alone with the Lord during the days preceding Easter? Do you take advantage of worship opportunities that will help you experience the pain and anguish of Jesus and the disciples? Do you allow that season of reflection to help you confess your sin and heartfelt sorrow for it to God? If the answer to these questions is no...that you don't carve out any special time for this, consider doing so this year. Good Friday services are offered at the Boro at 5PM & 7PM; and in Union City at the Union City Senior Center, 27 Johnson Street at 6:00 p.m.

**PRAY:** Today ask God to help you experience the path that Jesus walked to the cross in a meaningful way...a way that helps you to understand the weight of your own sin that Jesus paid for with His life. Sunday (Easter) is coming...but use today to be faced with the darkness before the dawn that lies ahead.

## SATURDAY

April 23, 2011

**READ:** Galatians 6:7-10; Philippians 3:13-14; Hebrews 12:28; 2 Peter 3:11-14; 1 John 3:3

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** As you read through these passages, are they forward (future) looking, or backward looking? What are the themes that you can pull out of these passages...what are they talking about in general? Do they give you encouragement or discouragement?

**KEY CONCEPT:** The New Testament writers tell us how to live our lives in light of what God has revealed about the future. We will be compensated for how we live, rightly or wrongly. We are to persevere doing good. Listen for God's call, and pursue it. Live lives of thanksgiving and worship God.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** Like our heavenly coaches that are cheering on their earthbound team, Paul, Peter, John, and the writer of Hebrews are shouting out to us. Are we listening? Do we want to learn what God desires of us? What are some practical steps that you can put into practice in word or deed that will help you live into what you have read in today's reading.

**PRAY:** God's love for you is multi-faceted in nature. He has not only provided a way of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross, but He wants to help us live our lives now in a way that best prepares us to enjoy the full benefits of what is to come. Ask God today to help you fully embrace the spirit of today's readings, and to apply them in ways that will take you deeper in your relationship with Him.

\*Today's devotion is taken from Heaven Study Guide by Randy Alcorn. P. 82



WHAT IS  
**HEAVEN**  
LIKE?

PERSONAL DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

APRIL 17 - 23, 2011

WEEKLY PODCAST:  
WWW.MCLANECHURCH.ORG/SERMONS