



A Devotional Journey
& Daily Reading Guide

TRINITY LUTHERAN
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PASSIONA✝E LIVING

A Devotional Journey & Daily Reading Guide for Lent 2021 For the Trinity family by the Trinity family

Welcome to Trinity Lutheran's 2021 Lenten Devotion Book. Lent, a period of preparing for Easter, focuses on preparing our hearts through repentance, time in God's Word, and prayer. This devotion book, which is designed to guide you during Lent, will take you through the book of Mark (our Ash Wednesday devotion, which focuses on repentance, is from the prophet Joel). We pray that as you read and ponder the entire life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit helps you to grow as a follower of Jesus.

We praise God for the 40 Trinity Lutheran members who wrote devotions, of which four were our Kids Connection authors: Amy Cottone, Sara Hlava, Angie Frazier and David Zastrow. We believe you will be blessed by the variety of voices that have contributed to this effort.

A few tips for using this devotion book:

- Set aside 10-15 minutes for your daily devotion in a quiet place. It helps to do your devotion at the same time each day when possible.
- Slowly read the entire Bible passage for the day and highlight something that stands out to you.
- Read the devotion for the day and prayer.
- If you're adventurous, try journaling some of your thoughts on the passage and praying in your own words.
- Another option is to read the devotion with others.
- Miss a day? That's okay! Start again with the day you resume.

We pray you are blessed along your Lenten journey!

The Trinity Lutheran Devotion Team

Before you get started . . .



This is a QR code!

Start each devotion with the scripture readings. Grab your Bible or use the provided QR codes that will take you to that day's reading in the YouVersion Bible App or in some cases, to BibleGateway.com. QR codes are used to educate, inform, explain, and in this case, for presenting you with the scripture reading for each daily devotion.

Many phones can read a QR code using the camera function. On some older devices, you will need to download a free QR code reader from the app store. Hold your device over the QR code so that it's clearly visible within your smartphone's screen. When you hover over the QR code a notification will pop up with a link to the reading.



Kids Connection

A family faith opportunity!

Kids Connection is included in our Lent devotions to make this a family opportunity to share the truth of God's Word everyday together. There are a variety of conversations or brief activities that bring the point home to your family. Parents, God has given you the privilege of having the greatest influence of faith on your kids. We invite you to LEAN IN during LENT and let the Holy Spirit use those moments to strengthen your relationships and grow in faith together!

RECALCULATING

Pastor Billy Newell



Have you ever been on a road trip and taken a wrong turn? Yeah, me too! When our family goes on road trips, we always put our destination in our GPS. There is so much to see along the way and I'm pretty easily distracted. No matter how many trips I've been on, I always end up missing a turn or turning the wrong way. At that point I hear, "Make the next legal u-turn" or "Recalculating your route". I've come to really appreciate the help I get from my GPS when I lose my way.

As followers of Jesus, we sometimes lose our way. We sometimes venture farther and farther away from God's desired path. In those moments, GPS takes on another meaning. God's Passion Saves! Our heavenly Father is slow to anger and abounding in unfailing love. He invites us to turn around and He sends Jesus to show us the way. As we journey through Lent, we spend intentional time asking Jesus to redirect our steps to be more in step with Him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What specific things have caused you to lose your way as you follow Jesus?
2. What encouragement do you find in knowing God is merciful and compassionate?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, when I lose my way, look upon me with your mercy, compassion, and unfailing love. Turn me back to your path and help me to see Jesus' passion for me each day. In Jesus' name, Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

As we journey into this season of Lent, we can take time to reflect and ask Jesus to show us where in our lives we may have taken a wrong turn. Take a drive as a family with a destination plugged into your GPS and purposely take a wrong turn or two. What did you hear? ("Recalculating or Rerouting.") Talk about how Jesus guides us and "routes" us back to the path He desires us to be on.

SO BEGINS THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Casey Lartz



You hear about a crazy guy in the desert dressed in camel's hair and eating locusts. Everyone in Jerusalem and the whole countryside is going to see him. He speaks with such passion. He speaks with such authority. He speaks right to you!

So begins the Gospel of Mark . . . no Christmas story, no wisemen, no genealogy or backstory. We start with a call to repent. We start with a call to be baptized. We start with a call to prepare for Jesus. We start maybe a little confused where this is going.

Do you see Jesus baptized by John? Do you see the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove? Do you hear the Father's voice from heaven say, "You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy"? Do you recognize the mystery of the Trinity revealed to you? Do you wonder what it means? Do you desire to learn more about Jesus?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Will you join us as we follow Jesus through the pages of Mark's gospel?
2. What specific time each day will you set apart to be with Jesus?

PRAYER

Lord, I hear John the Baptist's call to repent and be baptized. While I might not be sure what all is involved in that, I am willing to learn more. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

In today's passage Jesus is baptized. Today, talk about each person's baptismal day and why it is important to remember and celebrate. Go out for ice cream or make a cake to celebrate this faith milestone. Make it a tradition to celebrate your baptism birthday each year. (If you are interested in learning more about baptism, we invite you to call the church office at (309) 828-6265.)

TEMPTATION – FILL IN THE BLANK

Christy Malinowski



You're with a group of friends, enjoying the conversation, and then the gossip begins. What do you do? Or . . . You're behind in your homework and your friend offers to let you copy their work. What do you do? Or . . . _____
(fill in the blank with your own temptations).

We have all been there: temptations are all around us. If you are like me, we fail and give into those temptations all too often. In our reading today, we hear that Jesus was tempted by Satan for 40 days! As true man, Jesus endured these attacks and felt the pressure to give in. But as true God, Jesus was able to endure so that He could keep the law perfectly for you and me. Jesus understands the temptations we face and just as the angels were there to help Him, He is with us and will help us in our time of temptation. So when temptations come, and they will, look to God's Word* and look to the cross to remind you that Jesus defeated Satan once and for all! Through His death we have been given the gift of forgiveness and salvation. * Read Luke 4 & Matthew 4 to see how Jesus used the Word to combat Satan's temptations.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Can you identify a temptation that you repeatedly struggle with?
2. When you look at the empty cross, what does that mean to you?

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, give me strength and help when temptations are all around me. Help me say "Not today, Satan!" When I fail and give into those temptations, forgive me. Thank you for enduring the cross and giving me salvation. We love you Jesus, Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

What is most tempting to us, knowing that it is not something we should have? For example, for some of us, if there are fruits and vegetables in our kitchen and we know they are good for our bodies, are we as tempted to eat those as we are tempted to eat a lot of great-smelling, fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies, that we have been told not to eat and that we know are not as good for our bodies? We are often tempted to do wrong by the devil who knows what we want most, aren't we?

FOLLOW ME

Rachel Bahn



At once. Or immediately, as some other translations say. Simon, Andrew, James, and John left all they knew to follow Jesus at once. Imagine sitting in a meeting at your place of work or during the middle of your Zoom meeting. Maybe you're folding the laundry or making dinner. It's just a casual day, and you're carrying on as you normally would. Then some random man walks into the room or rings your doorbell and tells you to follow him. What do you do?

As we read this story, we know who this random man is. It is Jesus. We know He is God, we know He is calling together his disciples and preparing for the beginning of His 3-year ministry. But these men don't know that. Or do they? Why would they walk away from their normal lives to follow this man? They had to have felt the Holy Spirit's presence.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What hesitations do you have when it comes to following Jesus?
2. When have you felt the Holy Spirit calling you to act? Write it down.
3. When has it been hard to trust God's call?

PRAYER

Lord, help me be open to hearing your call. I desire to follow you with no hesitations. Please give me patience and strength to act according to your will. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Play FOLLOW the LEADER, taking turns as the 'leader'. This is a fun game, but in our daily lives we play follow the leader, too. In school, in church, in sports—in any activity we are in—there are always leaders. Every day we are faced with making a choice of which leader we will follow, so we must be sure to choose a leader that will lead us in the right direction. Jesus leads to salvation!

I WANT (all of) YOU!

Karen Leesman



On a trip to the Holy Land, standing in the Capernaum synagogue from today's text, I was blessed to feel God's presence and peace some 2,000 years since Jesus taught and healed there. As He taught that Sabbath, Jesus had everyone's attention, even the "evil spirits" possessing one of the congregants. They, too, knew the Holy One of God and cried out with questions for Jesus: "Why are you interfering with us? Have you come to destroy us?" The NIV translation is "What do you want with us?"

We, too, often have "unhealthy voices" and burdens buried deep inside us connected to grief, guilt, loneliness, pride, broken dreams, addiction, abuse, etc. Have you ever cried out in desperation, "Lord Jesus, what do you want with me?" And then you hear His answer, "I want all of you! Your pain, your broken spirit, and all your anxiety. I have given everything for you, even my life, that you may be free from the sin of this world. Draw near to me, and I will heal you and restore a right spirit within you."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What have you been holding back from the Holy One of God, pretending that everything is fine?
2. When will you share those concerns with your Savior Jesus as you seek His healing?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to heal us from our sinful thoughts and actions. Help us to listen to His teaching and share our burdens with Him. In the name of Jesus. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

What is one thing that keeps troubling you, something that you keep choosing to do your way instead of God's way? Draw near to God, read James 4:7-8, pray and ask God to help you to "Draw near to the One most dear,

Be close to the Holy Ghost,

Keep Jesus, the Son, my number One!"

Watch the 2019 4th grade class share Mary Bloebaum's ditty from the First Bible Chapel message:

<https://youtu.be/igqqmdz8HSk>

WATCHING THE SUNRISE

Ken Detloff



The narrative leading up to today's verses, and the verses which follow it, are a whirlwind of activity as Jesus sets out on His mission. He is about to go into all of Galilee with the Gospel message of salvation and healing.

But first, we are given one of those divine moments when Heaven touches earth. He, who was with the Father in the glorious creation of the cosmos, sits in solitude watching His handiwork unfold into a new day. We can scarcely imagine the depth of communion between Father and Son in that moment! Yet, as earthbound as we currently are, we can also seek communion with the Father, just as Jesus teaches us to do in this moment.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When was the last time you had a sunrise or sunset fill you with reverence for our Creator?
2. Is there room in your life for Holy solitude?
3. If Jesus sought quiet sanctuary with His Father, how much more should we be seeking it in the hectic pace of our lives?

PRAYER

Father, Your glory is all around us, whether it's a star filled sky, an act of selfless kindness, or the simple loving hug of a child. Grant that we have the quiet in our souls to receive what You send our way. Amen



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus wants us to spend time with him. Take a “time out” and find a quiet spot and spend a few minutes talking to God.

THE GENTLE WHISPER

Annie Finch



I often find myself distracted. In this busy and chaotic world, it can be difficult to focus completely on what is in front of us. We may not hear the gentle whisper of the Holy Spirit, guiding us through encounters with those God has placed along our path. When we look at the life of Jesus, we can see how he gives his full attention to those who are suffering, both physically and spiritually.

Jesus encountered the leper and was filled with compassion for him. Jesus heals this man, even when the leper did the exact opposite of what he was told. Jesus calls us to show grace even to those who will walk away continuing to disobey God's commands.

In the second example, Jesus is preaching to a packed room, but when the paralyzed man is lowered through the roof, he completely stops what he is doing. Not only does Jesus heal this man of his physical infirmities, but he also forgives him of his sins and heals him spiritually. All of us are given opportunities to quiet the distractions and open ourselves up as a vessel for the Holy Spirit to work through us for the spiritual healing of others.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are there times when I show less compassion or concern to those I may judge to be ungrateful or undeserving of my time, efforts, or generosity?
2. What do I need to do to put away distractions and fully allow the Holy Spirit to work through my interactions with others?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to give my full attention to all of those who have been placed along my path. Allow the Holy Spirit to work within me so that I may always be filled with compassion in my interactions with others. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus cares and shows compassion for others. As a family, make "care packages" (these can include non-perishable food items, band aids, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.) and give to those in need. What are some other ways we can follow Jesus' example and show care to others?

THE INVITATION

Dave Wilcox



Levi did not hesitate to accept Jesus's invitation to follow him and be his disciple. But Levi did not stop there. He invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests along with some disreputable sinners. Scolded by the Pharisees for associating with "such scum," Jesus replied that these were those for whom he had come.

I'm reminded of TLC member Harold Alexander, who is now in Heaven. Harold loved to have fellowship with other Christians and I was blessed to be one of them. Harold also loved motorcycles and would gladly sit and visit with other bikers, some of whom others would have considered "such scum". But Harold knew they were just like us—sinners, who Jesus loves, suffered and died for. And when the opportunity was there, Harold was ready to share Jesus with them.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you been a Christian so long you have forgotten that you are a sinner saved by grace?
2. Is there someone in your life who needs the forgiveness and love of Jesus?

PRAYER

Lord, It seems like it's so much easier to judge people than to love them. By the power of the Holy Spirit please enable me to share your love and forgiveness with others that they too may have the gift of eternal life. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Levi was a first-time listener when Jesus called him. Being a first-time listener isn't always easy, is it? It can be especially hard when we're called to do something we do not want to do, like clean our room, set the table, or take care of our pet. Being a first-time listener can also be hard when we really aren't sure what we are being called to do, but Levi followed Jesus when Jesus called him. Do you think he was scared or nervous, even at least a little bit?

FROM THE HEART

Casey Lartz



When you worship is it with your whole heart or are you merely going through the motions? In today's passage, the Pharisees were trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong with regard to Jewish religious practices. First, they asked why Jesus and his disciples were not fasting like others were doing. Jesus replied that his disciples were not going to fast just because everyone else was doing it.

Secondly, the Pharisees accused Jesus and the disciples of working on the Sabbath because they harvested grain and ate it. The Pharisees had developed strict worship rules that focused on a person's outward behavior more than the intention of the person's heart. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that King David "worked on the Sabbath" to meet the needs of God's people. David's heart and his outward actions reflected God's purpose for the Sabbath: "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of the people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can you engage your heart the next time you recite the Lord's Prayer?
2. How can you worship from your heart not only on Sunday but also on the other 6 days of the week?

PRAYER

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14



KIDS CONNECTION

Prayer is a way we can talk with God. This week be intentional in engaging your heart in prayer. At your next prayer time (meal or bedtime), ask your child to substitute their own words for the usual recited prayer ("Come Lord Jesus . . .", "Now I lay me down to sleep . . ."). Talk about afterwards: What did you notice? How can you make this a regular practice?

GOOD NEWS!

Kevin Brown



Here Jesus continues to perform miracles of both body and spirit. By now He was drawing large crowds and creating excitement. But because Jesus came to save mankind — not overthrow the Roman government — He sought to keep a low profile in order to avoid attracting Roman opposition. In this section, He continues efforts to keep His healings and identity secret, even by commanding evil spirits to obey!

Why does Mark emphasize Jesus' various efforts to remain unknown? To demonstrate His greatness! As Jesus continued preaching and healing, His brilliance and identity became undeniable.

Through faith, we today should have the same excitement as those who witnessed these miracles firsthand. In fact, we should have even more; since we know of Jesus' resurrection—proof that we have eternal life through faith alone. There is no longer any reason to keep this good news a secret!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Can you imagine the growing excitement as Jesus continued preaching and healing throughout the time period of this passage?
2. Do you fully internalize this excitement and relief as you tell people the reason for your hope as a believer (see 1 Peter 3:15)?

PRAYER

Almighty God, we thank you for Jesus' preaching and miracles, which culminated in a large, ardent following to witness His life, including His crucifixion and triumph over death. Help us to vividly experience that same passion anew each day and to share that with others! Amen



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus' love is too exciting to keep it to ourselves! Write the words of John 3:16 on several red paper hearts. Then put them where others can find them—the grocery store, the library, a friend's desk at school. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

LOVING & HUMBLE SERVICE

Mary Bloebaum



Do you ever ask the question, “What should I do now?” It could be at a time of transition, big decisions, challenges, or unknowns. Jesus is our example. At a critical point in His ministry, responding to opposition, He spent a night up on a mountain in prayer (Luke 6:12). Immediately following His time alone with God, there is a readiness for the next important task.

Jesus is our example. Relying on God’s wisdom, He chose 12 men who would carry on what He started, eventually reaching to the ends of the earth with the Good News. How would these disciples, as he called them, know how to continue His message forward after His resurrection? A disciple was a student, but not in a classroom and lecture sense. A disciple learned by being with and following his master. In their three short years together, these men had a front row seat to the example of Jesus. He modeled a life of communion with the Father; a life of love and humble service; a life lived on purpose for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus has called you into a life of following. Will you be an example and lead the way?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are you continuing to learn from Jesus as you follow Him?
2. What examples from Jesus’ life have had the greatest impact on your own life?

PRAYER

Dear God, we praise you for your son, Jesus, whose life and work was set before us as our example. Grow in us a desire to follow you and in so doing lead others to do the same, by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Play a game of “Simon Says” using JESUS as our example. Some ideas: Simon says “serve others”, “wash another’s feet”, “the Lord’s Prayer”, “love your neighbor”, “Follow God!”

CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

Pastor John Hafermann

There is always a point to Jesus' teaching.

Jesus was on a mission from His heavenly Father to do His will while here on earth. Other people's intentions may well have been in our Lord's best interest, but they were nevertheless a distraction to the very purpose of Jesus' life and work. Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him. They stood outside and sent someone to fetch Him to come out to see them. "Your mother and brothers are outside asking for you." The text lets it be known there was quite a crowd gathered around Him. Jesus uses this attempted distraction to make the point that nothing is going to interfere or keep Him from doing the heavenly work He came on earth to do for the sake of the entire world of sinners. Jesus handled the situation in such an ingenious fashion. Jesus has a way to spin the truth.

By faith, we're all children (whosoever believes in Him... John 3:16) of the Heavenly Father.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When have you been distracted from doing God's work?
2. How can you keep from those distractions?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for showing us the truth of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Help us to keep close to the purpose you have for us and the work you'd have us do. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus is a great teacher and was always teaching because He wants us all to be part of God's family. Today, you get to be the teacher. Pick your favorite bible story and teach it to your family. Who, outside of your family, can you teach about God?

GROWING IN FAITH

Chris Trimble



Have you ever scratched your head when you read a parable? Wondered just what it's getting at? A parable makes you think and that is the point! Jesus wants us to engage with His word: "He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders" (Mark 4:11).

And Jesus begins with the parable of the farmer sowing seed. It tells of the Gospel being shared and how Satan, our human nature, and the cares of the world snatch faith from us.

I tend to see myself as the fertile soil. I KNOW the Holy Spirit lives in me. But there are so many times when I ignore Him and I miss an opportunity. I neglect my faith and I wither under pressure, or I lose focus and I choke on my worries.

This parable helps me understand what is happening to me. It points me to Jesus!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Take your time as you read these parables. Think on them. How do they apply to your life right now? Converse with Jesus about that.
2. What does he want you to see this time?

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank you for your passion for teaching and for lessons that make us think. Grant us insight into our life and show us how you wish us to change to better live as your children. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Parables are stories Jesus told to help us understand the heart of God and help us understand how things work in the Kingdom of God. Go for a walk and talk about the parable of the farmer scattering the seed. Point out areas where seeds will not grow and areas where they will and why. Take it further by buying a pack of seeds and planting them in different conditions (no soil, not enough soil, rocky soil, good soil. etc.). As they grow or don't grow, continue to have faith conversations about ways we can continue to grow in our faith.

SCATTER THE SEEDS

Christa Springer



As we read the parables in these verses, the one that speaks to me is the parable of the seed growing. I love the challenge of growing plants from seed, although it always concerns me if I'm doing it right. I read the instructions, plant the seed, keep it watered, and make sure it has enough light, but not too much. At first nothing seems to happen, then maybe 10 days later I see it—a little sprout popping through the crust of the dirt.

Jesus tells us the parable of the seed growing: “Night and day, while he’s asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens” (Mark 4:27). As we interact with others and show the love of God, we are scattering the seeds of God’s kingdom. We don’t need to understand how it works, just know that it works. If we continue to scatter the love of Christ, His love will continue to grow throughout our community and the world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are ways you can scatter the seed of Christ’s love?
2. How does it feel to give God control of the seeds you scatter?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, each day is a chance to scatter seeds for Your kingdom. Help me to be aware of those opportunities and then to let go and let your miracles happen. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Watch and sing as a family: Faith as Small as a Mustard Seed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFEUjy42xNk>

BE STILL

Gretchen Buhrke



Maybe the disciples wanted Jesus to get up and help row or move to the front of the boat for balance. The disciples panicked in fear. They put Jesus' power into human restrictions, instead of the passionate loving power of the Son of God.

Jesus arose and exceedingly surpassed the disciples' expectations. He did not just grab an oar, Jesus spoke "Silence! Be still!" and the storm was gone. Everyone's life was changed forever.

What are you asking God to do right now in your life? Are thinking "if God would just..."?

Like the disciples, go to God and ask Him for help. And as the disciples learned to do, put your faith in the Almighty One. His passionate love is limitless. Our God is able to surpass any of our expectations.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you had an encounter with Jesus that exceedingly surpassed your expectations?
2. How did your life change?
3. Who can you share the passionate story with today?

PRAYER

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to Him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21)



KIDS CONNECTION

The winds and waves listened to Jesus because He is the Son of God our Creator. Notice God's amazing creation today and take a family walk. Listen to the wind, look at the water, know our God made that, and He made you and loves you passionately.

GO AND TELL!

Hannah Kroonblawd



Yesterday we read about Jesus' power over the storm, and today we hear about Jesus' power over brokenness. Here is a man who has to live in a cemetery because he is so dangerous to others—and even dangerous to himself. He had been bound with very real chains on the outside, as well as having demons chained to his soul on the inside. But Jesus heals him. The demons are cast out, and the man is free!

My favorite part of this passage is what comes next: the difference between verse 17 and verses 18-20. Take a look at those verses again. The people who hear about this miracle, who see the changed man, find themselves wrapped up in so much fear that they ask Jesus to leave. The man who has been freed from the demons asks the opposite: he asks to go with Jesus. But Jesus has a different task for him. He needs to go home and tell others about the mercy of God!

Like the man who is freed from his brokenness, we are freed from our sin! How can we do anything but tell others about how much Jesus has done for us?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where have you seen brokenness?
2. How has Jesus freed you from brokenness?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for showing your great mercy to us by freeing us from our brokenness. Be with us as we share your mercy and freedom with everyone around us. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Listen to Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) and take time to thank Jesus for freeing you from your brokenness. Who can you share this message with?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ePZc1bE9RQ>

TRUST IN GOD'S TIMING

Clare Griffin



When Jairus came to Jesus about his daughter, it was apparent that he had faith in Jesus. As Jairus was taking Jesus to see his daughter, a woman in the crowd who also had faith in Him touched His robe. She had been sick for 12 years and was instantly healed. When this happened, Jesus stopped the crowd to find out who had touched Him. While He was doing this, a messenger came and said that Jairus' daughter had died.

When Jairus heard this news, he was probably not too happy with the woman or Jesus. Jairus was most likely thinking that if the woman did not touch Jesus' robe, his daughter would have been healed and wouldn't have died. When reading this story, it shows us that God's timing is the best timing. We can be angry at God when we pray and He gives us an answer of "no" or "wait." Sometimes when we pray, he says yes. We need to trust in God's timing and plan for us. He is never late, but always on time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Has there been a moment in your life when God told you to wait?
2. How can you show patience when God tells you to wait?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, please always remind us that your timing is best. Give us patience during these times. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus wants us to have faith and trust Him in all circumstances. Start a "God sighting" jar. Every time you see God work in your life (big or small) write it down and put that piece of paper in your "God sighting" jar. Then when life gets tough and faith is hard, pull those "God sightings" out and be reminded of His faithfulness.

FURTHER HIS KINGDOM

Wally Bergman



Two very different astonishments stand side by side in these verses. First, Jesus' teachings amaze His hometown neighbors. Despite His magnificent work of deliverance, reaction to Him is mixed. In the Greco-Roman world, most regarded a carpenter as uneducated and uncouth, and a man was identified only as a son of his father. To be identified only as a son of his mother could be an insult. Secondly, Jesus marveled at their unbelief even after they witnessed His mighty works.

Jesus knew He would soon complete His earthly ministry by dying on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind. Thus, Jesus sent His disciples out two by two, giving them authority to teach, heal, and perform miracles. His ministry was expanded, while the disciples gained valuable experience which would bear much fruit in their ministries after Jesus' ascension.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Is Jesus astonished by your reaction to His gospel?
2. What can you do to further His kingdom?

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, open our eyes and hearts to your healing grace. Give us courage and strength to witness for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus commands us to go and make disciples. He has given all of us gifts, talents and the power of the Holy Spirit to further His kingdom. How can you use your gifts to help others to see, know, and follow Jesus?

OUR GOD IS MORE THAN ENOUGH

Mark Heidloff



The followers of Jesus had been very busy doing all kinds of ministry. Jesus said they should find a deserted place to rest and recharge. But the people followed them and arrived ahead of Jesus and his disciples on the other side. So instead of a deserted place, they were greeted with a very large crowd.

Instead of being angry, Jesus had compassion for the large crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So what did He do? He began to teach them many things about the kingdom of God. When it got to be late, the crowd got hungry. His disciples wanted to send the crowd away so they could buy something to eat. But Jesus told his disciples that they should give the crowd something to eat. The disciples thought the same thoughts we would think. We don't have enough money! We don't have a large food supply! We're tired! Let somebody else do this!

But Jesus took exactly what they had to work with—5 loaves and 2 fish—and multiplied it to feed this huge crowd. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, fed the crowd both spiritually and physically that day. And there were even leftovers! Our God is more than enough! With God, little is much!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What of your time, talents, and treasures could you give to God that he might multiply them to benefit His kingdom?
2. Has God been nudging you lately to take a step of faith so you can serve him in a new way?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help me to always be willing to put aside my excuses, and instead to follow Your example, to be compassionate, to do my best to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people you place in my life. May I be more like You. In Your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

God has blessed each of us with so much. Write LEFTOVERS along the left side of a piece of paper. Think of words for each letter that would be things that you could share with others. Make a plan with your family to donate clothing, food, or toys to an accepting organization.

REACH OUT

Sol Roberts-Lieb

Have you heard the phrase, “Work smarter, not harder”? We often work as hard as possible to solve a problem that could be solved more easily. If that’s you, don’t worry! The disciples were in the same boat...quite literally.



The disciples were rowing through strong winds and fighting as hard as they could. Despite their effort, they didn’t make any progress. They needed help. When the one person who could help, Jesus, came by the boat walking on water, they thought He was a ghost and were terrified. Though they had seen Jesus feed the 5,000, they didn’t realize He could walk on water and stop the wind. They were surprised that as soon as Jesus boarded the boat, the winds calmed and they could row to shore.

We are like the disciples. We have a friend in Christ and all we need to do is reach out to Him. He will calm the storms in our lives and help us row to shore. We just need to know He is awesome in power and no matter what we need, He can help. Are you ready to work smarter through Jesus and not harder?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When has Jesus helped you work smarter and not harder?
2. How will you start calling on your Friend more often to help?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for helping us through all of life’s storms. Help us to call out to you and know that you can help us no matter what we are going through. You are our friend. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus is our best friend and He is always there to help us. When did you need someone's help to do something hard? How does Jesus help us when we are going through hard things?

JUNK FOOD JUNKIE

Chris Westbrook



When we want to get in shape and improve our well-being, would we continue to eat unhealthy junk food and be a couch potato? No. We need a healthy diet and regular exercise to improve or maintain optimal health. The same is true for our hearts and minds. We are born sinful and unclean. There is also a lot of 'junk' in the world that can fill our hearts and minds and separate us from God. If we let that sin, that 'junk', grow, it will cause pain. It can hurt relationships with family, friends, and neighbors. The 'junk' also hurts us. It hurts us spiritually because sin interrupts our relationship with God and the life He wants us to live. Just as with physical well-being, we must take action to improve our spiritual well-being. Get rid of the 'junk' and, instead, fill your heart and mind with those things and people who promote a healthy spiritual life. Be fed by His Word daily. Regularly exercise your heart and mind with prayer and conversation with God. These things help us shed our sinful thoughts and actions and move us to a stronger, closer relationship with God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What 'junk' do you have in your heart/mind that interrupts your fellowship with God?
2. What time each day will you devote for spiritual well-being 'exercises'? Who might serve as a 'workout partner(s)' on this journey?

PRAYER

Lord, please help me to reject the things that allow sin to grow in my heart and mind. Help me to focus on you and be intentional with my time so that I can grow closer to you. Thank you for the patience, love, and mercy that you have shown to me. I pray that I share it with all who I encounter so that they too may come to know You. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Rules are hard to understand sometimes. We know some rules exist to keep us safe or keep others safe, but some rules just don't seem to make sense. And yet we need to follow them and not wonder why they are so important. Is there a rule you don't understand? Have you asked your parents about it? Maybe they can help you to understand it better.

ON BEHALF OF OTHERS

Maribeth Lartz

Can you heal my child? Will you please help my friend?

Have you ever said these words or heard someone else say them?

In today's passage we meet a mother in Tyre and a group of people from Sidon, both of whom are begging Jesus to heal someone for whom they care deeply. The mother humbly and persistently pleads with Jesus to remove an evil spirit from her daughter who is at home. The group from Sidon pleads for Jesus to lay his hands on a man who is deaf and unable to speak. Jesus responds to both pleas in unique ways and provides healing to the daughter and to the man.

Have you prayed recently for a relative or friend who is physically sick or needs spiritual healing? Someone who has lost hope or needs encouragement? Sometimes our friends and relatives are not praying for healing, so we must pray on their behalf. God responds to our heartfelt prayers and petitions for others in ways unique to their situations.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever begged or pleaded on behalf of someone?
2. Who needs your prayers today?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, please prompt me to pray for someone specific today who needs physical or spiritual healing. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus responds to prayer. Who do you know that needs prayer? As a family, write down each of that person (or use a photo or drawing) and the specific prayer for that person and commit to praying for them each night during Lent.

A RE-RUN OR SOMETHING MORE?

Andrew Offermann

Have you ever watched a sporting event as a re-run on TV? The element of surprise is gone. It's never as captivating as a live contest.

Ever wonder why in the eighth chapter of Mark, Jesus feeds the 4,000, when in Mark 6 he feeds the 5,000? I mean if you've fed 5,000, isn't 4,000 a little anticlimactic? Is this just a repeat, re-run, or is there a deeper meaning here?

On the most basic level, there was a real need on the part of the people gathered. It could also be said that Jesus was building faith in his disciples or demonstrating his divinity as the long-awaited Messiah.

Isn't it interesting how the disciples ask the same questions they did two chapters earlier? Didn't they recognize the situation and realize they had been here before? Can you relate to the disciples? I sure can. All too often in my own life, I forget to remember how God has been faithful to me in the past— even if I have been there before.

Has God been faithful to you in the past? Rest assured He will be faithful to you in the future— even if it feels like a re-run.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When have you seen God's faithfulness in your life?
2. How can you remind yourself of God's faithfulness?

PRAYER

Lord, help us to always be reminded of your faithfulness to us. When we forget, bring us close to you again. In your name we pray, Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

When you really want something, do you keep asking for it? You can return to God again and again with your requests, saying, "Your will be done." God invites you to pray boldly and to pray in His will. Read Luke 11:1-13.

OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE

Angela Bargmann



Today's reading starts with a man brought to Jesus for healing by his friends. This blind man's friends not only led him to Jesus, but also were the ones doing the begging. Perhaps he wasn't sure about this cure; he couldn't see it. Jesus led him away from the crowd and used physical touch to heal the man. His response shows us he still didn't see. His eyes could see, but his weak faith wasn't allowing him to truly see until Jesus, in grace, touched him again.

Peter, on the other hand, is bold and confident. He is so confident in what he believes that when Jesus predicts his own death, Peter pulls him aside to correct him! This disciple who just proclaimed Jesus as Messiah didn't see as much as he thought he did!

What about us? There may be times when we are unclear on what God is doing in us, like the blind man. Other times, perhaps we, like Peter, are sure we see it—only to learn we didn't. As we lay down our own doubts, fears, and pride to follow Jesus, we can trust the Holy Spirit to clear and sharpen our vision.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What do you believe God is doing in your life right now?
2. How clear is that vision??

PRAYER

Lord God, Open my eyes to the ways You are at work in my life. Give me courage to trust Your Spirit, even when what I see isn't what I expect. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus always knows what is best for us and guides us even when we don't understand. Put a blindfold on one member of your family. Set up obstacles (like small paper cups) throughout one room in your house. Have the blindfolded person try to get across the room without knocking over any of the obstacles. What happened? Have them try again but this time guide them. Now what happened? Jesus always guides us, we just need to listen and obey.

OVERCOMING UNBELIEF

Pastor Chuck Bahn



We all have that special place or maybe a special time when we feel closest to God. Perhaps it is in worship, out in nature, or when sitting quietly reading a devotion or God's Word. It would be nice to stay in that place or time forever, would it not? But if we were to do that, we would miss out on so much of what Jesus calls us, His disciples, to do. Peter, James, and John would have liked to stay up on the mountain with Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. But if they had stayed there, they would not have been able to help a father and his son who desperately needed what Jesus could give them.

The father knew who to go to: Jesus. He had faith that Jesus could and would heal his son, but the father had to admit that a part of him still doubted and still wondered if Jesus could and would. "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When was a time that someone came to you to provide help you needed?
2. If you could live an event from your life over again one more time, what would that event be?

PRAYER

Lord, I know that you chose me and called me to go with you to be alone with you. Help me to follow wherever you may lead me. Help me to also follow you to give to those who need what only you can give. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus reveals or shows Himself to us when we spend time with Him. Build a tent and spend some time reading God's Word or listening to worship music and pray for opportunities where Jesus can reveal himself to others through you.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Kimberley Boehm



Have you ever been afraid to ask a question? Read this verse again: “They didn’t understand what he was saying, however, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.” What a perfectly human moment the disciples are having. They couldn’t begin to understand what their Lord was telling them, but were apprehensive about finding out more. I can think of numerous occasions from elementary school to now when I’ve been too afraid to ask difficult questions.

Unlike the disciples, we don’t have to be afraid to ask challenging questions! We are so blessed by having the Bible’s story in its entirety. We know and believe in Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection. We can always pray to Him, asking for courage and guidance—even when we’re afraid. Whether we’re at home, work, school, or anywhere, we can pray without ceasing, finding strength in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can you lean into Jesus, even when you’re afraid?
2. Where will you find courage the next time you’re afraid to ask a question?

PRAYER

Lord, we know you are there for us in the good and the bad. Give us courage to trust in you, even when we’re afraid, and follow where you guide us. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus taught the disciples to welcome children. Have your children trace their own hand on a piece of paper. Color the hand and write one word on each finger of the hand: JESUS LOVES ME VERY MUCH! Display it in a place that will be a daily reminder.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Deb Weaver



In this passage, the disciples seem passionate, judgmental, and quick to criticize someone who was driving out demons in the name of Jesus. This man appears to be a believer, but not a member of the inner circle of the followers. Jesus reminds John of this: “Anyone who is not against us is for us.” He even uses a simple illustration for his disciples when He says, “If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.” Isn’t it amazing that Jesus provides encouragement for his disciples, as well as for us, that we are to work together to share the message of the Gospel?

Our sinful nature can sometimes lead us to judge others—those who don’t look like us, those who have differing beliefs, or even others within the Christian church. Jesus’ view of sharing the Gospel was far more inclusive than that of His disciples. Let’s pray for God to give us eyes to see others as Jesus sees them. Then may we work together to share the forgiveness and love of the resurrected Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When have you worked together with others in the church to spread the Gospel?
2. What sincere examples have you seen of people outside the church sharing the Gospel?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, Give us eyes to see others as Your children. Also, give us the courage and passion to work together with other disciples to spread Your message of love and peace. Thank you for the promise that your Holy Spirit is with us always. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

When Jesus looks at us, He does not see our mistakes; He does not see the things that we do not like about ourselves. He sees us as His Children and when we look at others, He wants us to see them as He sees them. Create a pair of glasses that gives you “Jesus eyes.” If you are tempted to judge someone, put on the glasses and ask Jesus to help you see them the way He does.

THE TREASURE OF HEAVEN

Bailey Bottorff



When it comes to wealth and possessions, people are usually savers or spenders. Very few are labeled givers, because giving isn't easy! We like to keep what we've earned to ourselves. But Jesus doesn't just call us to give generously—he calls us to give up everything!

Wealth, possessions, and even people can provide us with security and happiness. But by following Jesus, we are promised so much more: treasure in Heaven and the ultimate gift of eternal life. Knowing what we have to look forward to, it becomes easier to share what we have been given with those who need it most.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can you stay focused on heavenly treasures instead of earthly treasures?
2. What is one thing you could share with a person in need today?

PRAYER

God, help me to keep my focus on following you and the ultimate gift of eternal life. Help me to be generous with the possessions you have given me and use them for your glory. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus wants to be the most important thing in our life. If Jesus asked you to give up everything you own and follow Him today, what would be the hardest and why?

FOR EVERYONE – NOT JUST ME

Pastor David McBurney



As Jesus travels to Jerusalem with his disciples, he shares for the third time his ultimate destination: death. But this description is different from the other two.

This time Jesus provides devastating details. Take a few moments to read the description again. Read it slowly, allowing yourself time to picture each protracted and painful part: “They will mock him... spit on him... flog him with a whip... and kill him...”

As Christians, we often say that Jesus died for our sins. And it wasn’t just for the sins of those who did the actual mocking, spitting, flogging and killing. Jesus died for everyone. As we read in Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” My sins put Jesus on the cross. So did yours.

REFLECTION QUESTION

How does the vivid description of Jesus’ death help you comprehend His love for you?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying a despicable and gruesome death so that I may have life in you. Forgive me all of my sins and help me follow you in every part of my life. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus came to this earth for one purpose - to die for the sins of the world. Jesus did not turn away from that mission, but went on to the cross for you. Say a prayer as a family, thanking Him for His great LOVE.

ORDINARY SERVANTS

Chris Parker



As I sit wearing my mask at the donut shop, I notice people around me wearing different masks—some are funny and many are colorful. I wonder what people would think if I wore a “Happy Face” mask. Would they assume I was happy inside? What if I wore a “Frown Face” mask? Would people ask me if I was OK? Would they offer help and support? Probably not.

Jesus tells His disciples that to be great in His Kingdom, they must be servants. Our church offers many opportunities, both big and small, to help and serve others.

But how would God’s people know if you were in need of help, support, or just someone to listen? Would you need to wear a “Sad Face” mask or a big sign? Mark writes that Bartimaeus, a blind man begging at the roadside, began to shout “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” when he was told Jesus was walking by. Even when he was told to be quiet, he shouted even louder to Jesus for help. Bartimaeus had faith and courage to reach out, to shout out for help. Jesus heard his plea and healed him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are two ways you can serve others?
2. Who can you pray for who needs God’s help, mercy, and love today?

PRAYER

Lord, open my eyes to see those in my life who need encouragement and to know your mercy. Help me to reach out to them to offer love and support and be a servant for your Kingdom. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus didn’t come to be served, but to serve. Today, go and serve your neighbor or someone in need and do it without them knowing it was you who served them. Some ideas include, scooping their sidewalk, pulling their weeds, providing them dinner, sending them an encouraging card, etc.

LET'S GET EXCITED!

Jan Wirsing



No one alive in the 1960s can forget how the rock group the Beatles took America by storm. Expectations grew at concerts as security guards held back screaming, fainting fans when the Fab Four took the stage in city after city. The amplified sound of drums, guitars, and voices were unable to suppress the outpouring of enthusiasm from the faithful gathered for a glimpse of British music royalty.

Our Lord made a similar spectacular entrance at Jerusalem. His disciples anticipated He would at last publicly proclaim Himself as King and Messiah. Word spread among those celebrating the Passover at the Temple . . . soon the road was clogged with people eager to shout “Hosanna!” Many were carried away by the enthusiasm of the multitude, and yet within three days these same people were calling for Jesus’ death.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Recall a time you were excited about Jesus as your Savior.
2. How do you prepare to meet your King?

PRAYER

Oh Lord Jesus, we are thrilled to have you as the Savior of our lives. May the excitement we have to greet and welcome you into our lives be with us all the way to heaven. May it always be so. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Did you notice how the people praised Jesus in this story? The people probably didn’t even realize that after this first Palm Sunday, Jesus would give his life on the first Good Friday. Imagine how much praise they would have given him then! They may have done more than put down their coats and brought him a donkey to ride on. What other ways could the people have praised Him? What ways can we praise Him for all He has done for us?

OPPORTUNITY - FOUND

Steve Nalefski



Frustration. Despair. So many opportunities lost. Have you felt this way in the last year? In today's reading we see the human side of Jesus. He was frustrated that a fig tree failed its only job: producing fruit. Even more frustrating to him was how he found the temple: full of people who completely forgot the temple's purpose. Things didn't end well for either the fig tree or the money changers.

What does Jesus see when he looks at us? Do we live up to our calling as forgiven children of God? Has God given us a talent that we don't use, or use improperly? Was there a task before us that we did not complete?

God has given us the gift of eternal life by dying on the cross for our sins, and we too often are not thankful for this gift. This puts us in the same category as the fig tree and the money changers. But Jesus offers us hope. "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." We can have faith that even though we fall short, when we repent and cleave to Jesus, we are forgiven and renewed. We have a second chance to live a life of gratitude.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What talent or task have you not followed through with?
2. What will you work on this week, through prayer with God's help?

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, I daily fall short of the plans you have for me. Help me to be open to your will to serve you with my spiritual gifts. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

God invites us to take all of our worries and burdens to Him, but often we want to carry them by ourselves. Fill a bag with heavy items and let everyone take a turn trying to lift it. Next, have everyone lift it together. Which time was easier? When you are feeling worried or anxious, pray to God and know that He hears your prayer. Read Matthew 11:28-30 together as a family.

REJECTING THE CORNERSTONE

Steve Jiles



Here Jesus is teaching stories in the Temple area. This one is the parable of the Evil Farmers. The man who planted the vineyard is God and the vineyard is the nation of Israel. The religious leaders of Israel are the tenant farmers. The servants are God's prophets who were faithful to Him. The son is Jesus.

The religious leaders killed those who were trying to fulfill what Israel stood for. They were so jealous and possessive that they ignored the welfare of the very people they were supposed to be bringing to God. By telling this story, Jesus exposed the religious leaders' plot to kill Him and warned that their sins would be punished.

Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders and He would be rejected by most of the Jewish leaders. But how wonderful is it that Jesus would become the cornerstone of a new building, the CHURCH!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you rejected God?
2. Would you like to follow Jesus' life and teaching, which is the firm foundation for the CHURCH?

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, help me to follow You and learn more about You by reading the Bible and attending CHURCH. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus will always help us know when we are doing something wrong. After sharing the parable of the evil farmers with the religious leaders, they became angry because they knew Jesus was speaking about them. How do you feel when you have been caught in a sin? How do you react? How do you know when Jesus is pointing out a temptation or sin?

TWO COMMANDS

David Apps



Jesus was continually defending His teachings against the religious leaders of His day. After the Pharisees fail to trap Jesus with their taxation question, the Sadducees step forward to stump Him with a question about the existence of resurrection and life after death. Jesus once again quotes Scripture to correct their serious error in thinking. Then Jesus is asked, “Which of all commandments is most important?” He responds by telling the religious teacher that there is only one true God and that we are to love Him above all else, with everything we have. Secondly, we are to love others as ourselves. Jesus summarizes the original intent of all the Old Testament law by stating these two commands.

Like the Sadducees, sometimes we concentrate so much on the things to come that we lose focus of what is most important. We neglect our relationship with God and our love for Him in the present! If we live our lives in love for God and others, then we are truly fulfilling the law of Christ!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do we complicate our faith instead of focusing on what is most important?
2. What are some tangible ways we can demonstrate our love for God above all else and also our love for others?

PRAYER

Lord, sometimes I fall into the trap of missing what is most important in my life. Please help me to put my priorities in order and to love you above all else, so that in turn I may show your love toward others. Amen!



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus told the teacher of the law that there really are only two important rules to follow. That sounds like it should be pretty easy. Two rules. But those two rules are so difficult to follow that every day—actually, every minute of every day—we have trouble following them. Grown-ups have just as much trouble and sometimes an even harder time following them. Wow, we are so thankful that God forgives us when we don’t follow His rules!

THE TRUTH SOURCE

Tony Griffin



As a teacher for many years, I was evaluated by my principal. He or she would come into my classroom to watch my lesson and see how I was teaching my students. I could only imagine how my evaluations would have been if they watched me teaching a subject and sharing information that was not true. For example, sharing information about the Germans bombing Pearl Harbor or multiplying all three sides of the triangle to get the perimeter and the students believing every word I said. What if students would go and complete their homework with these facts and sharing with others as if everything was accurate? The teacher said it, so it must be true!

Fast forward to the next school year, if the students have a new teacher and the students do not believe what the teacher is teaching. They might even boast about their knowledge, or not even listen to their parents. Well, that is exactly what the scribes were doing when Jesus was asking questions. They were giving information that was not true. Not only that, they were living in a way that is close-minded and for themselves. It was like covering your ears and saying, “I am not listening; I am not listening!”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Who is giving the accurate information? What is the true source? What are the real facts?
2. Are we living the way Jesus wants us to live? Are we living for ourselves or for Jesus?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise you for your true word. You are the true Messiah! May we take the true word and put the words that we hear into living for you and not for ourselves. We ask this in your Holy name. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Make two signs which say “True” and “False”. Take turns holding the signs. Share some things that might be true or untrue and have the other person hold up “true” or ‘false’. This game reminds us that we should always listen to God’s word to decide what is true. Knowing when to ask questions and remembering to turn to God’s Word will help us follow Him in the path He has chosen for us.

A WIDOW'S TRUST

Lyle McBurney



The passage of the widow's offering is short in length, but tall in exemplifying what life as a Christian should look like. The widow gave two coins, which was everything she had, in offering to God. She trusted that God would provide for her daily needs. She did not know how her needs would be met, but she believed that her God would care for her nonetheless.

Our Heavenly Father desires for us to put our trust in Him in every aspect of our lives. On the cross, Jesus gave His very own life for us, which should motivate and inspire us to respond through the giving up of our time, money/possessions, and talents for His kingdom. As we do this, we trust in knowing that God will provide for us because of His great love and care for us. Let us rejoice that we get to rely on our Amazing God!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does absolute dependence on God look like in your life?
2. How can you grow in trusting God each day?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving everything you had in your death on the cross for me. And thank you for always providing for my every need. I pray that you grow me in trusting you in every aspect of my life. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

God looks at our heart. He knows if our actions are to glorify Him or if we are trying to impress others and draw attention to ourselves. Act out the story of The Widow's Offering. Why do you think Jesus shared this story with us?

STANDING FIRM

Kurt Busse



Imagine being with Jesus as he was teaching and pointing out the stonework of the temple. It was amazing, stones so massive that it would still be a feat of engineering today. Some were 37 feet long, 12 feet wide and 18 feet tall. They seemed indestructible, but Jesus points out that it will all be destroyed. This leads his closest disciples to ask: When will we know this is about to happen? Jesus' reply is startling, as all manner of destruction, persecution, pain, and suffering are described. The disciples do not realize that Jesus is talking about more than the end for the temple and Jerusalem, but the end of all time here on earth.

We can get caught up in trying to tie Jesus' prophetic words to specific events, but that is not the main point. All of this evil has and will come about because of sin and Satan trying to steal us from our Creator. Jesus warns his disciples, and us, to watch that no one deceives us, to stand firm. May we not be distracted by the creations of man, nor by the suffering of a fallen creation, but hold fast to the One who endured the ultimate pain so we might be redeemed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are you being distracted by the world?
2. What can you do today to stand firm in the faith?

PRAYER

Lord help me not to be deceived by the evil one, either through the glamor of this world or by the pain and suffering. Let Satan hear me clearly say that I am your child, saved through the redeeming act of your Son. In Jesus' holy name I pray. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Asking questions when we don't understand something is important, isn't it? Sometimes we still don't understand the answers, even when we REALLY want to understand. We get answers like "maybe you'll understand more when you're older" or "you'll just have to trust". Sometimes grown-ups don't understand either, even when we think we do. And sometimes, we still "just have to trust". We can be thankful that God ALWAYS knows the answers, and that trusting God is NEVER the wrong answer! Whew!

READY OR NOT!

Pastor Tom Wirsing



In Mark 13, Jesus warned the disciples of terrible times coming with the arrival of the “abomination of desolation”. Prophesied in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11, the abomination was when the temple in Jerusalem would fall, be desecrated, and mark the end of all sacrifices. A terrible time, indeed. Jesus linked the abomination with the terror of the judgement of the world at the end time. He told his loved ones, us included, that the end is coming. We don’t know the day or the hour, so we are not to get hung up on the little things of life in this world, develop some false sense of security, or be deceived by the false christs and false prophets that will appear.

Instead, Jesus’ message is for us, His followers, to be ready at all times, because He will return in full glory for all to see. In the meantime, we remain alert, ready, and living for Him, knowing that when He returns, He will take His faithful to heaven to live forever with him. Ready or not, here He comes.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which little things of life distract you? How do you overcome them?
2. Do thoughts of the end times frighten you? If so, how does this passage give you comfort to overcome those thoughts?

PRAYER

Lord, help us to be alert and awake to your coming. Give us faithfulness to be watchful and in prayer, that we may escape the terrors of the end of the world and enter Your presence with joy. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Sometimes you might feel afraid or unsettled. Jesus invites you to turn to Him. He will give you peace. Memorize this verse to comfort you when you feel afraid: “Peace I give to you . . . Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” John 14:27

KEEP WATCH

Pastor David McBurney



Christians believe that one day Jesus will come again. Jesus clearly commands His followers to not try to figure out when He will return. However, people have been trying to predict Jesus' second coming since He ascended to heaven.

In the past 50 years, 18 different people have predicted Jesus' return. They were wrong. And though five others have predicted His return sometime in the next 35 years, they will be wrong too.

Since no one knows when Jesus will return, what should we do? Keep watch! Jesus isn't telling us to wait on the couch until He returns. He desires us to live lives that follow Him and proclaim the Gospel to others. Our mission at Trinity is to "share the love and forgiveness of the resurrected Christ and make disciples." That's a great way to keep watch!

REFLECTION QUESTION

What are specific ways that you could actively "keep watch" today?

PRAYER

Father, help me to keep watch by following Jesus and sharing His message with others until He returns. In His name I pray. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus wants us to "keep watch" and live our lives following His lead. Play a game of "ready, not ready". Pick one person to be the leader and pick a number between 1 and 5. Everyone will watch the leader. When the leader shows or does something the number of times that match their number, you may move forward that many steps. If you miss it, you have to move back that many steps. The first one to the finish line wins. Why was it important to watch carefully? How can we keep watch for Jesus?

THE LOVE SCALE

Casey Lartz



How would you react if someone poured perfume on your head? I would jump up and say, “What are you doing?!” But Jesus knew exactly what the woman was doing. It was the custom at feasts (and burials) to anoint a person, and she was doing it with the most expensive perfume available. It was so expensive that it cost a year’s wages. It was so expensive that it upset the disciples who thought the money was being wasted. It was so expensive because this is what she determined she could do to show her love for Jesus.

Contrast the woman’s love with the hatred of the religious leaders who plot Jesus’ death. Contrast the woman’s love with the response of the disciples. Contrast the woman’s love with the betrayal by one of Jesus’ inner circle.

Consider where your love for Jesus falls on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the hate of the religious leaders and 10 being the love of the woman. Yes, Jesus told the truth when he said, “. . . this woman’s deed will be remembered and discussed”. May we be blessed by her example.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What can you do to show your love for Jesus?
2. If an accountant looked at how you spent your money, what would he find you love the most?

PRAYER

Lord, give me an opportunity to show my love for you by putting me in a situation where I can love someone who needs it. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Being generous is one way to share love. Talk about different ways you can be generous to someone outside of your family. Choose one of those ways and go do it. Leave a note letting them know that they are loved.

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE

Pastor Chuck Bahn



You hear these words on a regular basis: “On the night when He was betrayed...” On that night, Jesus knew He would die the next day, a horrible death reserved for the most serious criminals. Jesus still has VERY important business to take care of. Jesus needs to give His disciples then and His disciples today His Word and His Supper. This Sacrament is given by God, and in it God’s Word is joined with bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. In doing this, Jesus connects all His disciples with the past—the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was the feast God gave to His people to mark their release from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. It was celebrated that first night and it continues to be celebrated today.

The bread was unleavened. In the Bible, leaven or yeast is often a picture of sin. In the Lord’s Supper Jesus tells you that, by your faith in His death and resurrection, you are released from the bondage of sin in your life. That is reason to celebrate and remember all that God has done.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. You are gathering with 12 of your closest friends and family for dinner. The chef is preparing the food. What are you going to serve those closest to you?
2. What are two things you want to tell those 12 people that will stay with them forever?

PRAYER

Lord, it is truly impossible to know the depth of your pain in going to the cross. I am so thankful that you were willing to do that for me! I am also thankful that you give me a reminder of what you did. You give me the opportunity to receive Your Body and Your Blood in and with the bread and wine. Help me to remember when I do this, that You have broken me out of the bondage of sin. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Experience the Feast of Unleavened Bread in a similar way to how Jesus and His disciples did. Spread a blanket or table cloth on the floor and gather around for a meal then share and celebrate examples of God’s faithfulness in your life.

GRACEFUL GUIDANCE

Brett Bloebaum



It is never fun to be corrected. Whether the correction comes from a person of authority, such as a parent or a co-worker, or another you respect, the feeling of letting someone down always carries a certain sting. It is rarely our intention to be disobedient or hurt another person. We just sometimes get tired, selfish, or lose focus of what is really important. We see this in our reading today that while Jesus was in an emotional moment with the Father the disciples get tired and miss following the instructions He had for them.

Do you have certain people, or mentors, in your life that gently remind, correct and steer you towards truth? God uses these people to be examples (1 Timothy 4:12) that guide us in word, actions, faith and love. These mentors can take many forms: school teachers, parents, best friends, pastors, bosses, etc. The best and most caring of those are often the ones who can lovingly share truth no matter what, even if we may have caused hurt or disappointment. Make it a point today to thank your mentors for being a valuable part of your life. Then, as we have opportunities to mentor others, may we follow Jesus' example and provide guidance with love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What mentors has God placed in your life to help you stay headed in the right direction?
2. What godly advice have you received recently that you need to focus on today?

PRAYER

Lord, I see your example of lovingly correcting those close to You. Help me to receive guidance and give guidance as You have taught us to do. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

God puts many people into our lives to keep us on the right path and make sure that we are doing the right thing. Write a THANK YOU note to a special person who makes sure you are following the right path to follow Jesus.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

Hannah Kroonblawd



God's plan for our salvation is here, even on the night Jesus is arrested.

Sometimes it can be so hard to understand the story of salvation! Judas didn't

understand—he brought an armed crowd to the garden. The other disciples

didn't understand—they tried to fight back against the crowd. The priests and elders and teachers

didn't understand—they couldn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

But Jesus is our salvation, promised from the moment Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden.

When asked if He is the Messiah, Jesus says "I am." He is certain because He is God, come to save

the world from sin. And we can be certain, too—certain of the truth of the words of our Savior and

that His life fulfilled all of the prophecies of the Old Testament. We can be sure of our salvation

through faith in Him alone.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think it is so hard for people to understand who Jesus was?
2. How can you remind yourself of the certainty of salvation?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the certainty we find in Jesus: for His life on earth, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. Help us always to remember your promise of salvation through Him. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus is our salvation. When Jesus was arrested, the disciples didn't understand what was

happening. Sometimes we also have questions. Start a question jar at your house. When you don't

understand something, put your question in the jar and once a week as a family have conversations

around your question. If you still don't understand, reach out to a trusted friend or mentor

to help you.

A TEACHING MOMENT

Dan Bell

We've all been there before. Many times our passion about something causes us to not see things clearly. Because of that, we've made a quick or foolish decision in the heat of the moment, and it's come back to haunt us. This is exactly what happens to Peter. Overcome with the emotions of a night in which he saw his teacher and friend arrested and led off to be executed, Peter denies Jesus, reacting in the moment.

No matter what sort of "foolish" things you've done before, know that "nothing can separate us from the love of God" (Rom. 8:38-39). He uses each moment in our lives to teach us, and to help further His kingdom. No greater example exists than Peter, who Christ used to build His church here on earth.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Can you think of a time when God has used a "foolish" choice or action to teach you something?

PRAYER

Lord, help us to know that your love is so powerful that nothing we can do can separate us from it. Help us to learn from our mistakes and use us to further your kingdom. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Read Luke 22:54-62. Peter turned away from Jesus and denied even knowing Him. After Jesus rose from the dead, He invited Peter to return to Him and serve God's people. Jesus has forgiven you too! How can you share His love with someone today?

WHAT GOD VALUES (you)

Shawn Hoffmann

How is value determined? Is an object's worth equal to what would be traded for it? Consider our value. The world and the devil would tell us we are worthless. They would remind us of our sin and the death and separation it earns us. They would have us hopeless.



In the very first chapter of Mark, God claimed Jesus as His very Son, dearly loved. Why then would the Father send Jesus to live among a sinful creation? Why would Christ give up almighty power to be beaten, mocked, and spat upon by those weaker than He? And why would the King of Life endure the humiliation of death and complete separation from the Father?

Because we are of the greatest value to God. Our God did not hesitate or toss us aside because of our sin. Instead, the Father sent the Son to live among us, taking on our hurts and paying our penalty of death. So consider our value. God has traded Christ for you. The temple curtain was torn open and we have been reunited with a God whose love is boundless. With this love we can go into the world and live passionately, full of hope.

REFLECTION QUESTION

1. Are there behaviors in your life that don't honor the value God has placed on you? How do you seek to change to reflect the value God has for your life?
2. Are there people in your life that need to experience His value and love for them through you? How do you reflect that love and value for them?

PRAYER

Lord, I sit in guilt for what you sacrificed for me. Forgive me for my selfish wants and ways. Grant me the peace and joy of knowing that I am of such great value to You that You see me through the blood of Jesus. Help me reflect Your passionate love to those around me. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

What happened to Jesus on Good Friday sometimes makes us cry. We feel bad for Jesus. We are so angry at the people who mistreated Him. We wonder how Jesus felt because no one tried to help Him. But as sad and angry as we are, we are also thankful that Jesus went through what He did because He did it for us! And we can say thank you to Him every day, do our best to follow His rules, and help others. In what ways can you do some of these things?

DETAILS GIVE WITNESS

Mary Bloebaum



We know from Isaiah 55:8 that GOD'S WAYS are not our ways. As we read the account of Jesus' burial, we may wonder why He provided so much detail about who was involved, how the burial was done, and where He was located.

As a follower of Jesus, why is Jesus' burial significant for us? It proves that GOD MADE A WAY; fulfilling scripture and giving evidence that the resurrection we celebrate on Easter is a reality. There were witnesses to his suffering on the cross, but the burial confirms His death. His body was taken down by friends who knew that He was dead, not just unconscious, and placed by them not in a common tomb but in a cave, with a massive stone rolled up to block the entrance and guarded by the soldiers of Pilate. These details give witness to the world that without any doubt we can know Jesus is the Son of God.

The Naysayers, concerning Jesus as the Son of God, were saying NO WAY. Believers can say in full confidence that his death and burial were real, living proof of his deity. That was GOD'S WAY.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What was the importance of proving that Jesus was really dead?
2. As a believer, what assurance does His death and burial give you?
3. When has been a moment in your life where God MADE A WAY to reveal His real love for you?

PRAYER

Dear God, we praise you for MAKING A WAY that gives us full assurance You are THE WAY, the Truth and the Life, through your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray! Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

By the power of His blood, Jesus MADE A WAY for us to be with Him forever! That is a power worth celebrating. Grab your dancing shoes and head over to: Power in the Blood | Rocky Railway VBS | Group Publishing - Bing video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yumxtCFoMgk> (Lifetree Kids - Power in the Blood)

HE IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA!

Pastor Billy Newell

His eyes welled up with tears and his face displayed overwhelming joy! You see, before this moment, he lived his life color blind. He woke up every day expecting to see a world a certain way. Then, he put on a different set of lenses.

They allowed him to see the vibrant colors of the world for the first time! There was so much that he never realized was there!

On Easter morning, the women went to the tomb expecting to see a lifeless Jesus. Upon arrival they learn that Jesus isn't there. Better yet, Jesus is alive! Alleluia! Christ is risen! All of a sudden, they could see a new future filled with a vibrant hope. Jesus conquered death so we can live forever with Him! From now on, we get to live with Resurrection lenses, seeing the world in a whole new way! Now, go and tell!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think it would have been like to be there and hear the angel's announcement?
2. Who would you want to tell first, if you saw the resurrection first hand? Now, go and tell them!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for claiming victory over death through your Son, Jesus! Help me to live every day with Resurrection lenses, seeing a vibrant hope and sharing it with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus' resurrection allows us to see the world in a whole new way! Grab a coffee filter (cone-shaped works best), a black felt-tip pen with water soluble ink and a clear cup or glass. Pour about a half inch of water in each cup. Draw a cross about one inch tall on the bottom edge of your coffee filter, place your filter into the cup and wait a minute. What do you notice about your black cross? The resurrection brings with it a beautiful view of our future. It is filled with hope and light! Now, go and tell!



THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Pastor David McBurney

Easter is not about one day. The message of Easter is intended to propel us forward as we share the forgiveness and love of the resurrected Christ and make disciples.



How do we live out this reality? We go into the world with the Easter message. Sometimes we use words to point to Jesus and other times we use actions to open opportunities to share. But we go into the world with the Easter message. Sometimes we won't know what to say or do until we're in the moment. But we go into the world with the Easter message.

Maybe you noticed that phrase "and the Lord worked through them" in verse 20. Jesus worked through people who failed him countless times and didn't know how to articulate their faith. That's encouraging, isn't it?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How could you go into the world with the Easter message today?
2. How has God gifted you to share this message?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You have called me to share your message with others. Give me the courage to share my faith with others in words and actions. Amen.



KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus' story didn't end in the grave: He rose again, He conquered death, and because of His great love for us, everyone who believes in Him will live with Him forever. Jesus' story of love and forgiveness is meant to be shared. Write a letter to yourself about who you are discipling and where you are in your faith journey. Each Easter Monday, pull out that letter and celebrate what God has done, thanking and praising God for those you were able to walk alongside, those you are still walking with, and those who will join you in this faith journey.

Notes & Reflections

Sharing the forgiveness and love of the resurrected Christ
and making disciples.

Notes & Reflections



SUNDAY WORSHIP

in-person and livestreaming on our YouTube channel
Trinity Lutheran Bloomington Normal

Traditional Worship

8:00 AM

Contemporary Worship

10:00 AM

MONDAY BLENDED WORSHIP

6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY LENTEN WORSHIP

in-person and livestreaming at 4PM on our YouTube channel
Trinity Lutheran Bloomington Normal

4:00 & 6:00 PM

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER WORSHIP

please check our website for up to date worship information

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