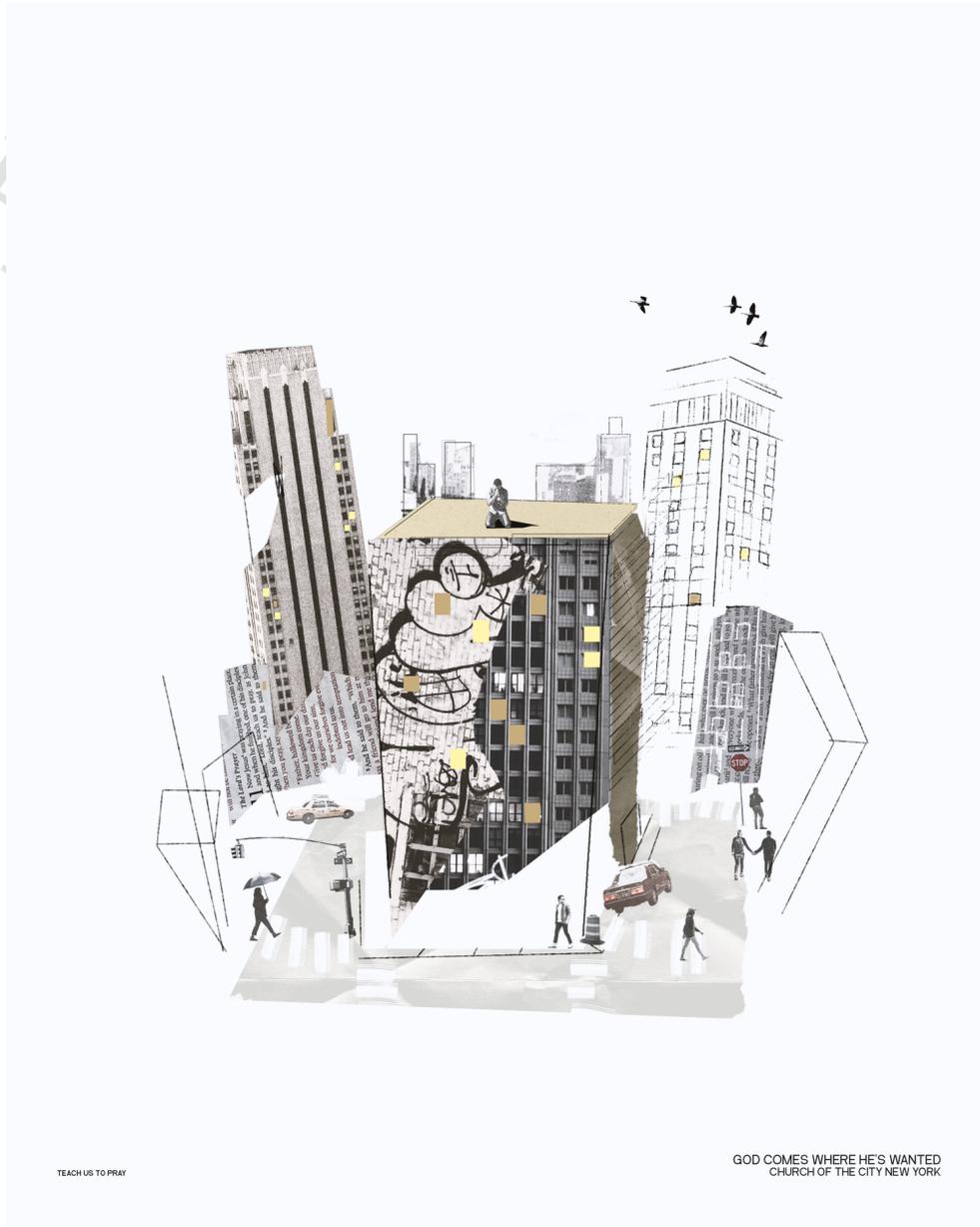


# God Comes Where He's Wanted 2.0 Series Discussion Guides

February - April 2023

## Week 1 - Asbury Outpouring



### Teaching Text

#### Mark 14:1-9

*Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him.*

*“But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.” While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly. “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*

## **Recap**

This Sunday, Pastor Jon taught from his reflections on his time at Asbury University last week and set out to answer these two questions: 1) What happened this past week at Asbury University? and 2) What should our church do in light of it?

On February 8th, a chapel service at Asbury University began and has not stopped since. For ten days straight, people have continued to pray, worship, share testimonies, and witness others repent and give their lives to Jesus. Reminded of Frederick Buechner’s words, “Go where your best prayers take you,” Pastor Jon traveled to Asbury, and was profoundly moved by what was and is happening there. It was clear that the Asbury Outpouring is a powerful move of the Holy Spirit, that is being marked by purity, humility, and being led by Gen Z for Gen Z with zero hype. After this experience, Pastor Jon’s encouragement for our church is this: we are not crazy for going after revival. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Asbury is a clue that God is doing something, and He is asking us to pay attention. It’s time to lean in with increased devotion, preparing our hearts, and strengthening the walls of our souls to carry the coming glory of revival.

Mark 14:1-9 displays the deep devotion of Mary when she broke the jar of perfumed oil and anointed Jesus. Others at the table protested with arguments of utility, declaring the oil wasted, but Jesus defended Mary’s devotion, calling it beautiful. The role of our church in this moment is not to succumb to criticism or confusion, but to seek God with all our hearts. As we continue to pray for a move of God in our own city, we must keep our hands cupped around the precious flame of devotion. Mary’s devotion filled a whole room, but Jesus’ devotion to us poured out through His own body, has filled all of human history. We must remember that as God is drawing near to us, He invites us to continue to draw near to Him.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Connect**

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "Gen Z"?

### **Character**

Ask someone to read Mark 14:1-9 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about what true devotion to Jesus looks like?

### **Consider**

1. When explaining what led him to visit Asbury, Pastor Jon quoted Frederick Buechner, saying, "Go where your best prayers take you." If you went where your best prayers took you, where would you find yourself— physically, emotionally, or spiritually?
2. The center of a divine window is devotion. What are some practical ways you can foster devotion for God in your daily life?
3. If desire is not cultivated, then it can become a distraction. What are some things that keep you distracted from desiring God?
4. Jesus does not seek a reasonable bride, but a radiant one. What does the voice of reasonableness say to you? How can you wrestle against the idea that your worship, prayers, and devotion have to be "reasonable"?

### **Cover**

Ask the Holy Spirit to stir a fresh desire and awe for His presence. Ask Him to show you how you can cultivate a practice of devotion to Jesus. If any distractions came up for you during our discussion, pray that those distractions will fall away as you draw nearer to Him. Finally, say a prayer for the students in Asbury and Gen Z as a whole.

## Week 2 - Cultivating Revival

### Teaching Text

#### 2 Kings 23:25

*“Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.”*

### Recap

This Sunday, fueled by the urgent movement of God at Asbury University and elsewhere, Pastor Jon dug into the spiritual roots of revival as part of our extended series, “God Comes Where He’s Wanted.” He pointed out that we’ve been in a period of spiritual decline for about 60 years, and the time for a return to Biblical Christian life through an outpouring of the Holy Spirit feels nearer than ever. Pointing to King Josiah’s story from 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles as an example, Pastor Jon emphasized our need to repent and draw near to God, tear out sin by the roots, recover the heart of worship and understanding of scripture, and restore redemptive spiritual practices to usher in revival.

King Josiah came to power in such a steep period of spiritual decline that the knowledge of God’s promises was considered lost. Yet, from a young age, Josiah turned to seek God like no one else before or after him by claiming King David as his spiritual father and determining to walk in his ways. He set about destroying the priests, shrines, and temples to other gods that had been established by previous kings in order to break the chains of idolatry that had been on the people for generations. He worked to restore the neglected temple of the Lord to bring worship of the one true God back to the center of communal life. In this process, a book of the law of Moses was discovered, and upon reading it, King Josiah deeply mourned how far his people had strayed from the ways God had set for them. In response to the Word, King Josiah restored the celebration of the Passover, a festival that served as a visceral reminder of God delivering the Israelites from slavery because of His great love for them, to call the whole nation back to the Lord.

Like King Josiah we need to reject the sins of being “nice” and toleration, and return to righteousness with renewed purpose, removing the roots of sin that have plagued our parents’ generation. Then we must reorder our lives to return worship to the center, and rediscover a love of scripture with humility, and avoid imposing our own interpretations on it. Finally, we must renew our commitments to spiritual disciplines, and look to the Christians who have come before us to find hope and guidance in the works that God did among them. King Josiah’s resolve to cleanse and restore the nation back to the Lord allowed God to move in power, and created a window for revival to break out that would bolster the future

generations that were sent into exile. There is a direct tie from the faithful work of King Josiah to the faithful life Daniel led in Babylon, and it is our hope that the lives we live today will set up the next generation with a spiritual inheritance that will allow them to thrive in any cultural context.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Connect**

1. What is your funniest childhood memory?

### **Character**

Ask someone to read 2 Kings 23:25 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about what God values?

### **Consider**

1. Pastor Jon explained that revival is not a special season of extraordinary religious excitement, but an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that restores the people of God to normal spiritual life after seasons of radical decline. How can you practically rearrange your day to day to allow your affections to be redirected toward God?
2. Pastor Jon explained that we are in a season of radical spiritual decline, which requires us to actively engage in our callings to restore the church to God's initial design. In what area(s) is your calling and how can you use it for God's purposes?
3. In creating room for revival to happen, King Josiah tore down idols and replaced them with things of God (worship and the Word). What idols can you identify in your life? What are practical ways to tear them down, and what things of God can you replace them with?
4. Pastor Jon identified the 'sin of being nice' as tolerating behaviors and practices outside God's will, out of fear of being offensive. When is a moment you have chosen niceness over truth? What feelings or circumstances led you to make that choice?
5. Pastor Jon used the analogy of seeds buried underneath the dry desert ground to communicate that the seeds for revival have already been planted and we need to call down rain from God in order to see them bloom. Where do you see kingdom seeds around you? What ways might God be calling you to submit to help cultivate them?

## **Cover**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where you have become complacent and lukewarm. Invite Him to give you a heart that longs for the same things God's heart longs for. Call on Him to help you reorder the rhythms of your life so that they fall in line with the purposes of God. Make sure to cover individual prayer requests as well.

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## Week 3 - Asking for a Friend

### Teaching Text

#### Luke 11:1-13

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'" Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

### Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy continued our "God Comes Where He's Wanted 2.0" series by taking a closer look at how Jesus calls us to pray in Luke 11. After He prays the Lord's prayer as a model, Jesus tells a story of an unexpected visitor to explain the posture we should pray from (shameless and confident) and the people we should pray for (others and ourselves). Pastor Suzy set up the context Jesus was teaching into, specifically around the obligations of hospitality. In the Ancient Near East, travelers depended on the hospitality of others to be taken care of and protected on their journeys. The host of the households they ended up at were expected to make every effort in meeting their needs, no matter how unexpected or costly. After searching their provisions, if they were unable to help because of their own lack, the host had to take on the posture of the visitor and humbly go to their neighbors for help. The Greek word Jesus uses (anaideion) describes how the host should ask for help, with a true awareness of their ask, and a bold, shameless audacity.

Jesus used this example to teach His disciples how to pray because culturally it would have instantly made sense to always have provisions prepared for guests, but it can remain relevant for us today. It is often inconvenient and costly to help exactly when we are asked,

whether of our finances, time, or emotions. It can also expose shame and pride in us when we are unable to meet the needs of others because of our own needs. Our current culture does not have a framework for the level of hospitality and care of Jesus' day, yet His call for His followers is clear— to throw off our sloth, desire for convince, shame, and pride to meet or pray for the needs of our friends as if they were our own. Like the faithful men who carried their paralyzed friend to Jesus on a mat and lowered him through a roof with the hope that he would be healed, we must boldly bring our friends to the One who can meet their needs.

Jesus is not asking us to do anything He did not do or experience Himself. During His ministry, He had no place to lay His head and knew what it was like to be dependent on the radical generosity of others. Now, He stands in heaven before the Father as the perfect host, ever interceding on our behalf to give us the very best of His Kingdom, and even Himself. We were strangers, dead in our sin, but Jesus determined to give up everything He had to meet our greatest need and restore us to life and friendship with Him. Being transformed into the likeness of Jesus includes taking on the posture of the host when faced with another's need; seeing their lack, giving of what we have, and shamelessly asking for help in prayer as we would for ourselves.

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Connect**

1. What is the best prank that you have pulled or that someone has pulled on you?

#### **Character**

Ask someone to read Luke 11:1-13 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do you learn about what Jesus values in prayer through this passage?

#### **Consider**

1. Who is a friend in your life that needs "bread" right now? What would it look like for you to meet that need?
2. What influences or ideas have shaped the way that you pray?
3. Why might you struggle to pray with shameless audacity and holy boldness for others? Are there any obstacles that are hindering you from engaging in this kind of prayer for those in need around you?

4. Pastor Suzy talked about how Jesus was interruptible when people came to Him for help. What most often stops you from being interruptible for others? What is one step you can take to become more interruptible this week?

**Cover**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anyone He wants you to intercede for this week. Take some time to pray with shameless audacity for them and their needs, trusting as Augustine said that, "He is more willing to give, than we to receive."

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## **Week 4 - Ask, Seek, Knock**

### **Teaching Text**

#### **Luke 11:9-13**

*“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

### **Recap**

This Sunday, Pastor Ashley continued our "God Comes Where He's Wanted 2.0" series by taking a closer look at Luke 11 where Jesus exhorts us to ask, seek, and knock. Prayer has less to do with technique, and more to do with who is listening. When we pray, we must remember who we're talking to: God, who is readily available, accessible, and can be "interrupted" at any time. Jesus gives us direct access to a kind and generous Father who 1) is willing to answer and ready to give; 2) will never deceive or harm us; and 3) gives us Himself.

Even though God already knows what we need and want, the invitation to ask Him is the opportunity to partner with God. The gospels are filled with the miracles people were bold enough to ask for. We can pray intensely and earnestly, knowing that even if our prayers are unanswered or something is withheld, God will never trick or hurt us. As we face unanswered prayers in our own lives, Pastor Ashley urged us to look to Jesus' example in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus pushed His trust in the Father to the breaking point as He deeply struggled with reality that He would soon die a brutal death, but still He went to the cross fully submitted to the Father's will, trusting that His trust would not be broken, and He would rise from the dead in three days. Jesus wholeheartedly trusted in the Father to satisfy Him, to protect Him, and to restore Him, and He calls us to do the same. The God Jesus bids us to come and pray to does not just want to give us good things, but He wants to and will give us the ultimate gift of His presence through His Holy Spirit.

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Connect**

1. As Spring is almost upon us, what are your favorite Springtime activities?

## **Character**

Ask someone to read Luke 11:9-13 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do you learn about God the Father through this passage?
3. What does this passage reveal about the purpose of prayer?

## **Consider**

1. Pastor Ashley acknowledged that sometimes we pray earnestly for good things, and still our prayers go unanswered. She explained that Jesus shared this experience when His unanswered prayer for the cup of crucifixion to be taken from Him (Luke 26:29) led to His resurrection and the salvation of the world. Is there a time your unanswered prayer has turned out to be a blessing?
2. Pastor Ashley explained that although God knows what we seek before we even ask, He still gives us the *power of request* and wants us to come to Him in prayer, exercise agency, partner with Him and be participants in our own lives. Has seeking God in prayer ever given you more clarity on what you desire? Has time communing with God ever shifted or altered what you desire or find yourself asking for?
3. Pastor Ashley encouraged us to remember who we are talking to when we pray. Is there something you've been praying for and have not received yet? Reflect on past seasons of prayer and believing. What did you discover about God's nature and character then and how can that remembrance spur you on in this season of believing?

## **Cover**

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you always believe and remember the truth about the Father we have. Pray that this knowledge will fuel your behavior, helping you approach God boldly in prayer. Then, cover personal prayer requests as people feel led to share.

## Week 5 - The Lord's Prayer

### Teaching Text

#### Matthew 6:7-13

*"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

### Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued the "God Comes Where He's Wanted 2.0" series through teaching on the Lord's Prayer - our "secret weapon" in the faith. Over time, Western Christianity has trivialized the Lord's Prayer, diminishing its true value and power in our lives. Now more than ever, we need to reclaim the power of the Lord's Prayer because it teaches us how to pray, orients our discipleship, frees us from the vanity and futility of self, and unleashes defiant hope.

The Lord's Prayer is an invitation to share in the prayer life of Jesus Himself, demonstrating that prayer is not about how much we pray, but about the God we are praying to. The Lord's Prayer orients our discipleship by giving us back a sense of wonder, changing our will to align with God's will, removing our worry, and enhancing our understanding that we are in a spiritual war. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we no longer pray with the focus on ourselves. Instead, we are freed from the tyranny of ego, and able to follow Jesus' example of submitting His will to the Father's by embracing our own Gethsemanes to seek first the Kingdom of God. While Satan's prayer creates orphans, conflict, anxiety, and sin, the Lord's Prayer orients us to a divine hope and Kingdom beyond what we see, making it the ultimate "God comes where He's wanted" prayer. Today, we can respond by praying this prayer with devotion, allowing this prayer to disciple us, and dedicating time and space to meditating on this prayer that Jesus Himself modeled for us.

### Discussion Questions

#### Connect

1. If you could go back in time and give your childhood self one Bible verse to keep close to their hearts, which would it be and why?

## **Character**

Ask someone to read Matthew 6:7-13 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What message is Jesus trying to share in this text with the people around Him?
3. What is your initial reaction/feeling after reading Jesus' advice on how to pray?

## **Consider**

1. Pastor Jon mentioned how the Lord's Prayer is potent and transformational because it:
  - teaches us how to pray
  - orients our discipleship
  - cultivates our wonder
  - frees us from the vanity/futility of project self

Which area above do you feel has the most potential for growth/improvement in your walk with the Lord during this season of life?

2. On the topic of how the Lord's Prayer helps cultivate Kingdom prayer, Pastor Jon said that "prayer gets us involved in kingdom conditions, not what we want, but what God wants." What do you think God wants here on Earth as it is in Heaven that you could start praying into/interceding for more?
3. Pastor Jon gave us some practical points to help us respond to his teaching that included being devoted to praying the Lord's prayer, and letting it disciple us. What's one way we can practice living out a part of this prayer that we currently are not?

## **Cover**

As a large group, write out the Lord's Prayer, line for line and then rewrite each point using your own words, style and viewpoint. Making the prayer a personal prayer between you and God. Read your personalized Lord's Prayers to each other and end by all unanimously praying the original Lord's Prayer together!

## Week 6 - Forgiveness

### Teaching Text

#### Matthew 6:7-15

*"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*

### Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued the "God Comes Where He's Wanted 2.0" series by teaching on the Lord's Prayer, focusing on the context of forgiveness it is presented in, reminding us that a life of forgiveness is an absolute necessity for followers of Jesus.

Our culture is obsessed with the myth of redemptive violence, but the vision of forgiveness that Jesus lays out in Matthew 6 takes a radically different approach. Forgiveness, Jesus' way, looks like coming to terms with what has been done to us, and then humanizing the person who has offended or wounded us. This allows us to process the situation with a Christ-centered perspective and make an active choice to forgive, declaring a heart-verdict of "forgiven" before God, and resolving that not to keep reliving the offense. Finally, it means walking in the way of forgiveness as a lifestyle and not just a one-time decision. Sometimes, this takes much longer than we're comfortable with, as our hearts require space and time to heal from deep wounds, but when we grieve our pain in a Christ-like way, we allow our emotions to come into agreement with the verdict of our hearts. Forgiveness is one of the key arcs of the Christian story, because God chose to forgive and redeem our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Denying our roles in this story by holding on to unforgiveness drives the presence of God away, and opposes His commandment to forgive others as He forgave us. However, God gives us the grace to move beyond our wounded selves from death into new life. As we remember God's forgiveness in our own lives, we are enabled to practice forgiveness as Jesus did, and pray that He would make us people who are slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and rich in mercy for those who hurt us.

## Discussion Questions

### Connect

1. What are some of your favorite stories of forgiveness? *(They could be stories you've read about, seen in media or art, or witnessed in person.)*

### Character

Ask someone to read Matthew 6:7-15 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about God's nature of forgiveness? How does this challenge or comfort you?

### Consider

1. When was the last time you received forgiveness from another person? What did you feel during that experience?
2. Pastor Jon presented an idea that the best healers are the wounded ones, those whose broken places have become areas of authority and empathy for others. What is an area of woundedness in your life God might want to redeem in this way?
3. Pastor Jon presented a few steps in learning how to forgive:
  - Coming to terms with what has been done to us by remembering what actually happened, admitting the emotional effects, and coming to terms with the consequences,
  - humanizing the offending person(s) by considering what was going on in their story,
  - processing as a follower of Jesus by remembering how God has forgiven the inexcusable in us,
  - choosing to forgive our offender(s) in our hearts before God even before God,
  - walking in a lifestyle of forgiveness and suffering love by allowing God's grace to carry us beyond our wounded selves.

Which of these is the area you most need the Lord's help for you as you process and practice forgiveness?

### Cover

Ask God to reveal the ways He has shown you grace you didn't deserve, and some of the ways He has forgiven you specifically. Then take a few minutes to ask God to reveal people

that you need to forgive and how. Afterward, if you feel comfortable, share these situations with your group and pray for them together.

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**Week 7 - Palm Sunday**



**EASTER 2023**  
**PALM SUNDAY**

"HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!"

## Teaching Text

### **Matthew 21:1-17**

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'" The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, 'have you never read, "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?" And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.*

### **Matthew 23:37-39**

*"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"*

## Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy closed out our series, "God Comes Where He's Wanted 2.0" by teaching on the collision of kingdoms Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday caused in the hearts of all who gathered to welcome Him. Pastor Suzy brought us into the story by exposing how our own desires and attitudes of self-worship can cause us to miss out on God's redemptive plan and His coming Kingdom just like the crowds that day.

As Christians, we often say that we long for God's presence, but we tend to want to pick and choose how and when He shows up. We worship the kingdom of self, expecting God to give us our immediate desires without surrendering to His will and seeking His kingdom first.

This is the same heart posture of the crowds in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Though they laid down cloaks and palm branches and cried out "Save us, Son of David! We welcome you," they were expecting a political savior to overthrow the oppressive Roman Empire and solve their immediate desires. Their outward appearance was one of worship and excitement, but in reality, they wanted Jesus' power to bolster their kingdoms of self. However, Jesus came to do so much more; not only did He come to heal their immediate needs, His plan involved a permanent solution to their deepest needs of sin and death. The crowd was so distracted by darkness and focused on building their own kingdoms, they couldn't see the Kingdom of Light when it was right in front of them, and Jesus wept for them.

In our own lives, we often cry out a broken and selfish "Hosanna" just like the crowds in Jerusalem, trying to welcome Jesus into our plans instead of surrendering to His. Instead, Jesus urges us to come to Him with a child-like faith, removing ourselves from the throne of our lives and instead trusting in His will. Jesus longs to gather His people in the safest embrace, as the Lord, Savior, Healer, and King. As we remember Jesus' sacrifice during Holy Week, we are called to heed His cries and seek His Kingdom first, laying down short-sighted satisfaction for eternal peace and the opportunity to see His Kingdom come.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Connect**

1. Does your family have any Holy Week or Easter traditions? Which one is your favorite?

### **Character**

Ask someone to read Matthew 21:1-17 & 23:37-39 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. From these passages, what can you conclude about how Jesus felt knowing His people were longing for a kingdom other than what He was bringing?

### **Consider**

1. Name some examples of different kingdoms you see playing out in your daily life and in the city. Which of the kingdom categories below do they fall into?

- The World (geo-political/social)
- The Air/Satan (spiritual realm/darkness)
- The flesh/self (human heart/sinful desires)

2. What areas of your life have you not surrendered and allowed Jesus to be the rightful king? What do you think is standing in the way?

3. Do you normally find yourself seeking something Jesus can do for you instead of seeking Him?

### **Cover**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas in your heart/life where you might be living for kingdoms other than Jesus'. Spend time confessing those spaces together, and pray for Jesus to come and rule and reign in more fully in your lives.

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