

SUNGAI WAY-SUBANG METHODIST CHURCH

Being with Jesus

VOL 1, JANUARY–APRIL 2021

NAME:

Being with
PASSION

Going with
PURPOSE

Doing with
POWER

SSMC's VISION

Transforming Lives, Expanding His Kingdom

Dear SSMC Church Family,

We first started ***Being With Jesus*** (BWJ) in 2017 taking the cue from Mark 3:14-15. Since those days of humble beginnings and with tentative baby steps, over the past four years as a Church we have read through the entire Bible – both Old and New Testaments as well as reading the Bible Topically or Doctrinally. It has been an adventure and walk of faith for many, if not all of us.

According to the BWJ Feedback survey I did Oct 2020, 92.6% of the 242 responses used at least one copy of the BWJ, growing slowly over the years with 87.5% rating it 7 or higher, which is very encouraging. 46% used it at least 4 times/week moving up to 73.7% at least 2 times/week. What I was especially delighted with were the 52.2% who responded that because of BWJ, they have read through both the Old and New Testaments for the FIRST time – all Glory to the Lord.

Personally, as your Pastor, it has been a very challenging and yet enlightening journey of faith over the past four years. Looking back at my Pastoral ministry since the year 2000, if there is just ONE THING I wish I had done when I first started, ***Being With Jesus*** would be my pick. I think we are the only Church that I know of that has a Church-wide Devotional Reading Program that is linked with our Pulpit ministry as well as our Discipleship Group Word Discussion – truly if it had not been with the Lord's help, we would not have come so far.

Come 2021, the Church Leadership has unanimously decided to continue with the ***Being With Jesus*** Devotional Readings with some changes, taking into account the comments many of you made through the feedback survey.

What to expect in BWJ 2021

1. Reading through the entire **New Testament** again but in a **Chronological** order. This will be especially evident in the Gospels since many of the accounts overlap. When you read the same Gospel accounts together, you will better appreciate the different Gospel writers, their particular emphasis and their intended audience. Any apparent "differences" in the various Gospel accounts will also be easily noticeable; where necessary, short explanatory notes will be included.
2. **Devotional Reading** for the Day. We have included a short Devotional Reading for each day that is related to the Bible Passage for that day. The Devotional Readings on the whole will be more Asian focused and Asian in context. This hopefully will make it easier for the reader to understand, relate and apply.

NB: The Devotional Readings are taken from published material and the source references will be listed at the bottom of the page.

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3. There will be **Reflective statements and questions** at the end of each Devotional reading as an aid to that day's reading. These can also service as Guides for DG Word discussion and sharing.
4. Our BWJ mnemonic **P.R.A.Y.** – Pray – Read & Reflect – Apply – Yield has been expanded to refer to: **PRAY & PRAISE – READ & REFLECT – ASK & APPLY – YIELD & 'YAKHAL'**. 'YAKHAL' is one of two Hebrew words for HOPE and ultimately it is our HOPE in Jesus that will make all that difference in all our lives. All of us must live our everyday lives with that Precious, Living, Blessed Hope ever present, as an unshakeable anchor to our Faith. So at the end of the day not only must we YIELD to God's Word and promptings but also have the assurance of 'YAKHAL' / HOPE that at the end, it will turn out well in the Lord.
5. BWJ 2021 will come in 4-monthly editions and will include **Extra Explanatory Notes** on key Calendar and especially Church Calendar Events e.g. Ash Wednesday or Maundy Thursday. Hopefully, this will give everyone a better understanding and appreciation of Historical / Traditional Church Practices.
6. For each day's Bible Reading portion, I have generally tried to keep to within 20 to 40 verses except for certain exceptions. For those who want more in-depth reading and study, I am putting together a **BWJ Plus edition** which will have an additional page of more in-depth material. This will be available only in softcopy, downloadable from our Church website.

Lastly, some may ask: "Why are we reading through the New Testament again? We have already done it in 2017." I would like to say that the Bible is timeless and inexhaustible. Many greater minds and intellects than yours or mine have spent entire lifetimes to study the Bible or even just parts of the Bible. Even then, there is always something new and fresh to glean and discover from God's Word. The Rhema Word of God is always living and active, and every time we read the Word, there are sure to be hidden nuggets waiting to be discovered.

Come 2021, let us together as the SSMC Church Family embark once again on this exciting adventure with God in and through His Word. Let's **P.R.A.Y.: PRAY & PRAISE – READ & REFLECT – ASK & APPLY – YIELD & 'YAKHAL'**.

Blessed BWJing 2021

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Why Are There Four Gospels?

By Don Stewart, *Blue Letter Bible*

Is there something special about the number four?
Why not more or less gospels?

Each Gospel Was Written For A Distinct Purpose

It is important that we understand these sources and what they are trying to accomplish. The Gospels are neither biographies of the life of Christ nor are they a disinterested record of certain events in His life. Each writer wants the reader to know the truth about Jesus and become a disciple. To accomplish this purpose, each Gospel is aimed at a certain audience and each writer is selective of the events he includes.

Matthew

The Gospel according to Matthew is aimed primarily at the Jew, the person familiar with the Old Testament. Jesus is portrayed as Israel's Messiah, the King of the Jews. Matthew records how the promises God made in the Old Testament, with regard to the Messiah, are fulfilled in Jesus. Matthew begins his book by stating the family tree of Jesus: *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"* (Matthew 1:1).

This genealogy demonstrates that Jesus is the rightful heir to the kingdom that was promised to David and his descendants and sets the tone for the book. The remainder of the book emphasizes that Jesus has the credentials to be Israel's Messiah.

Mark

Mark, on the other hand, is not writing to the Jew or to those who are familiar with the Old Testament. His audience is basically those people in the Roman Empire who are unfamiliar with the religion of the Jews. Consequently, Mark's Gospel does not start with the birth of Jesus or any family tree that demonstrates Jesus as a fulfillment of prophecy. It starts, rather, with the beginning of Jesus' ministry: *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"* (Mark 1:1).

Mark's is a Gospel of action. Jesus is portrayed as the servant of the Lord doing that job that God has sent Him to do. Thus, the emphasis is on doing, and Mark shows that Jesus got the job done. Consequently, Mark's gospel records more miracles of Jesus than Matthew, Luke, or John.

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Luke

Luke was written to those more intellectually minded. He states his purpose in the book's prologue: *Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account* (Luke 1:1-3).

Luke is not writing as an eyewitness but as one who is recording eyewitness testimonies. His portrayal of Jesus is as the perfect man. Hence, he focuses on those events in Jesus' life that stress His humanity. The Greeks in their art and literature were always looking for the perfect man. The Gospel of Luke reveals that man.

John

John, the writer of the fourth gospel, was an eyewitness to the life of Jesus. The things he recorded were for the purpose of establishing the fact that Jesus was the eternal God who became a man. John wanted his readers to exercise faith toward Jesus.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30,31).

When John states his purpose he also states that he is selective in what he has recorded.

Summing Up The Testimony Of The Four Gospels

We can sum up the testimony of the four gospels in the following manner.

- In Matthew, Jesus is the Son of David (Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 1:1)
- In Mark, Jesus is the Son of Man (Zechariah 3:8; Mark 8:36)
- In Luke, He is the Son of Adam (Zechariah 6:12; Luke 3:38)
- In John, Jesus is the Son of God (Isaiah 4:2; 7:14; John 3:16)

Summary

The four gospels were written to cover four aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus. Each gospel writer wrote from a different perspective to a different audience. They each looked at the character of Jesus from different angles. Thus the number of four arises from the four different perspectives we have given about Christ's life and ministry.

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Each author is presenting a different aspect of Jesus' character. In Matthew, Jesus is the king; in Mark, He is the servant; in Luke, He is the perfect man; in John, He is God. This is because each writer addressed a different type of audience.

The Gospels are not intended to be a history or biography of the life of Christ in the modern sense of the term. Each author is selective in what he portrays. Jesus did many more things than the Gospels record as John testified.

When the Gospels are compared with each other we get an overall portrait of Jesus. He was God from all eternity who came down to earth as the perfect man. He was the Messiah of Israel, the King of the Jews, the one who did the job that God sent Him to do. This is the testimony of the four Gospels.

https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_188.cfm

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GUIDELINES TO READING THE BIBLE CHRONOLOGICALLY

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

For your devotion, please try to use a easily understandable Bible version eg. NIV, ESV or NLT.

PRAY as you begin your devotion followed by a time of **PRAISE** – a simple chorus, scripture set to song or even a familiar hymn, whatever the Holy Spirit may impress upon your spirit. Some people find soft soothing background worship music helpful for their devotion.

READ the Bible Passage(s) for the day aloud if you can and then proceed to read the short devotional for the day. This will help to give a better understanding of the particular passage under consideration.

Take time to **REFLECT** on the words, the short devotional and also the 'guiding thoughts/ questions' at the end.

Try to see the connection between the Scripture Passage(s) and the Daily Key Topic and Key Verse.

ASK the famous "W's" questions : *Who! Where! When! Why! What!* Please take special note of REPETITIONS, SIMILARITIES and CONTRAST as well as sentences beginning with - BUT, THEREFORE, BECAUSE, IF and THEN.

APPLY – ask *How!* – How does it apply to me today? How is it relevant to my life, family, work, church or nation ? How, How, How!

Sometimes it's also helpful to ask :

- Is there a lesson to learn?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a promise to claim and keep?
- What encouragement or comfort may I gain?
- What new perspective is God showing me?

Lastly is there any area of my life that I need to **YIELD** to the Word – my behaviour, speech, action, thoughts, priorities etc. Reaffirm the '**YAKHAL**' or HOPE that we all have in Jesus Christ through His Precious Word - the Bible, written, preserved and kept throughout the ages.

GUIDELINES TO READING THE BIBLE CHRONOLOGICALLY

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

Any thoughts, comments, impressions or even questions that come into your heart and/ or your mind – please record it in the blank space provided.

Your BWJ book is PRIVATE and only you will read it. You can be totally honest and transparent with God especially if you have doubts, fears, even confusion and outright anger – write it down and lay it before God.

Rest assured that Almighty God is much much bigger than whatever doubts, fears or anger that you may have or feel.

Close by being still in the Lord's Presence, asking Him to reveal to you what is that ONE THING you need to learn and apply from today's reading to bring about life transformation?

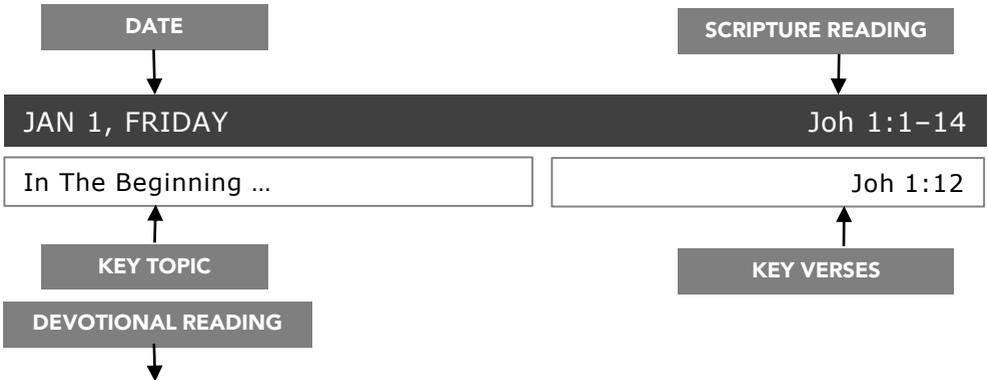
"To the degree & to the extent that I yield and submit to the Holy Spirit in my life, God's Kingdom will come more and more into my life, my family, my Discipleship Group, my work, my Church & my community."

Closing Thanksgiving Prayer

- *Pray for obedience and strength to faithfully work out the ONE THING that you have been reminded by His Holy Spirit.*
- *Bring to the Lord any prayer request that you may have for yourself, family, church, work, friends in the area of health, guidance, relationships, protection, provision etc.*
- *Good to write down key prayer items as a reminder of what and when you brought them before the Lord.*

GUIDELINES TO READING THE BIBLE CHRONOLOGICALLY

The daily readings for BWJ 2021 has been formatted as such:



After the Apollo XV mission, Colonel James Irwin related some of the high points of his experience. He told of weightless bodies floating free in the space capsule, the rising crescent of the earth as seen from the moon, and the triumphal splashdown before a watching world.

Irwin also spoke of the impact the experience had on his spiritual life. He said that from the lunar surface he sensed both the glory of God and the plight of earthbound man. As he came back to earth, he realized he couldn't content himself with being merely a celebrity. He would have to be a servant, telling his fellowman of a better way to live. Irwin concluded by saying that if we think it a great event to go to the moon, how much greater is the wonder that God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ!

Because man walked on the moon, science and technology have made tremendous advances. But because God walked on earth, we know both our origin and our destiny. We can know our Creator personally (Joh 1:1,14,18), and we can live in His light (v.9). Through Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death we have the joy of sins forgiven and an abundant life—all because God walked on earth.

By **Mart DeHaan**

**Down from His glory, ever-living story,
My God and Savior came, and Jesus was His name.
Born in a manger, to His own a stranger,
A Man of sorrows, tears, and agony. - Booth-Clibborn
God made His home with us that we might make our home with God.**

REFLECTIVE STATEMENTS & QUESTION(S)

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JOURNAL YOUR REFLECTIONS, IMPRESSIONS, THOUGHTS, LESSONS HERE.

ALSO PRAYER NEEDS FOR YOURSELF & OTHERS

SOURCE REFERENCE

JAN 1, FRIDAY

Joh 1:1-14

In The Beginning ...

Joh 1:12

After the Apollo XV mission, Colonel James Irwin related some of the high points of his experience. He told of weightless bodies floating free in the space capsule, the rising crescent of the earth as seen from the moon, and the triumphal splashdown before a watching world.

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By **Mart DeHaan**

**Down from His glory, ever-living story,
My God and Savior came, and Jesus was His name.
Born in a manger, to His own a stranger,
A Man of sorrows, tears, and agony. - Booth-Clibborn**

God made His home with us that we might make our home with God.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 2, SATURDAY

Luk 1:1-38

Truth versus Fiction

Luk 1:38

We live in a world where the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly under attack. Whether it takes the form of a film like 'The Last Temptation of Christ', or the book 'The DaVinci Code' or the documentary 'The Lost Tomb of Jesus', we are nevertheless faced with an unrepentant pagan world that seeks to impose its questionable facts on the serious seeker of truth.

It is important to persuade people that Christianity is true. How does Luke do this? He undertakes a very heavy task. He writes a book to Theophilus so that Theophilus may know the certainty of the things he has heard. Luke refers to three important facts. First, he says that his narrative is based on thorough and careful research (v.3). Second, he stresses his sources of information, (v.1) and there were many. Finally, these narratives conform to what the eyewitnesses have reported. But even better, he has had direct access to the eyewitnesses. Mary and the apostles.

Have we had doubts or questioned our beliefs when in conversation with our friends? Or have doubts arisen due to what we read and hear? If we are to take the Gospel to an unbelieving world, our story must be based on a thorough understanding of God's word and its application in our lives. We need to be like the Bereans who 'examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true' (Acts 17:11). Then having done our part, let us allow the Holy Spirit to do His work, for as Lydia listened to Paul's compelling sermon by the river, 'the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message' (Acts 16:14). The Holy Spirit works in the heart of hearers and convicts them of the truth.

Pray that God will use you as an effective instrument to share His Gospel with your non-Christian family members and friends.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 3, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

JAN 4, MONDAY

Luk 1:39-56

Break Into Song!

Luk 1:46

'The most revolutionary document in the world' - that's how missionary and preacher. E. Stanley Jones described this song.

Mary, the unmarried, impoverished, village girl, a nobody by the world's standards, could have allowed thoughts of rejection, ostracism, or stoning for adultery to fill her mind. Instead, she burst into a song of praise. She sang of a God who reached down and touched the pain of His people, who lifted the victims of economic poverty and political oppression and drew them into His arms, who demoted the proud, deposed the powerful and corrupt rulers and removed the greedy and the rich. Nothing had changed in Palestine. The Romans still oppressed the people, and poverty was rampant. How could her soul be bursting with joy when there was so much reason to tremble and fear? Foolish as it may seem, Mary had implicit trust in God.

It is the same God who is with us today. He never changes. When God is in control of our lives. He revolutionizes the way we think, the way we act and the way we live. We will no longer look at our situation, our surroundings and the world from our perspective but from His perspective. You may be in a situation of economic and financial oppression and life seems bleak and hopeless. There is so much you want from life but it eludes you. There are forces at work that are beyond your control. What can you do? Do what Mary did. Take your eyes off your present situation and look at the God who remembers, feeds, and exalts the poor. Worship Him. In His time He will open the windows of heaven and give you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

Let us ask God for help to tread the road ahead, knowing that whatever pain He allows in our lives has a purpose. Sing a song of joy and faith in the Lord.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 5, TUESDAY Luk 1:57-80

The Gift of Praise

Luk 1:80a

Zechariah is asked to name his eight-day-old son. He writes 'John' and is instantly released in his speech and hearing. He immediately praises God and prophesies of the coming Messiah. Having been deaf and dumb for nine months, one would have thought that his first words would be of thanks for the safe birth of his son and the restoration of his speech. Instead, filled with the Holy Spirit, he sings of the attributes of a great and wonderful God who has come to deliver His people.

What was Zechariah doing the nine months he was not able to talk? He would probably have spent a good portion of his time studying and meditating on the Old Testament, recollecting the life of Abraham and God’s promises to him and the delivery of the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. God’s provision in the desert for forty years, their arrival into the Promised Land and God’s continued protection over the nation of Israel would have passed through his mind. Above all, he would have read again and again the Messianic promises given by the prophets. It is no wonder that when he was released in his speech, his first words were of praise of this awesome, faithful God who had kept His promise to His people.

While we often praise and thank God for the things He has done for us, it is more important to praise God for who He is. Praise means focusing our thoughts on God’s attributes as Creator. Sustainer and Redeemer. It means recognizing, appreciating and expressing His greatness. May we be a people whose lives are filled with praise for the Lord. May we stand under God’s word and allow it to flow through us and over us. May we be transformed by the His word and His Spirit. As we do this, sooner or later, we will come face to face with the living God.

Meditate on Psalm 103:1-2. Praise and thank God for all that He has done for you, your family, your community and your nation.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 6, WEDNESDAY

Mat 1:1-17; Luk 3:23-38

Genealogy of Jesus

Mat 1:6b

It's easy to miss the significance in a name if you don't know the story behind it. In [Luk 3](#), we find a fascinating detail about a name in the ancestry of Joseph.

The genealogy traces Joseph's line backward all the way to Adam and even to God (v.38). In verse 31 we read: "the son of Nathan, the son of David." Nathan? That's interesting. In [1 Chr 3:5](#) we learn that Nathan was born to Bathsheba.

Is it coincidence that David named Bathsheba's child Nathan? Recall the backstory. Bathsheba was never supposed to be David's wife. Another Nathan—the prophet—bravely confronted the king for abusing his authority to exploit Bathsheba and murder her husband (see [2 Sam 12](#)).

David accepted the prophet's point-blank rebuke and repented of his horrific offenses. With the healing passage of time, he would name his son Nathan. How appropriate that this was Bathsheba's son, and that he would be one of the ancestors of Joseph, Jesus' earthly dad ([Luk 3:23](#)).

In the Bible, we keep finding God's grace woven into everything—even into an obscure name in a seldom-read genealogy. God's grace is everywhere.

By **Tim Gustafson**

What unlikely places have you seen God's grace showing up in your life? How can focusing on God's big story help you find the grace in your part of that story?

Dear God, help us to find Your grace everywhere we look.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 7, THURSDAY

Mat 1:18-25; Luk 2:1-20

Birth of Jesus

Isa 7:14

"Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left . . ." These hymn lyrics, written by the fifth-century Celtic Christian St. Patrick, echo in my mind when I read Matthew's account of Jesus's birth. They feel like a warm embrace, reminding me that I'm never alone.

Matthew's account tells us that God dwelling with His people is at the heart of Christmas. Quoting Isaiah's prophecy of a child who would be called Immanuel, meaning *"God with us"* ([Isa 7:14](#)), Matthew points to the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy—Jesus, the One born by the power of the Holy Spirit to be God with us.

This truth is so central that Matthew begins and ends his gospel with it, concluding with Jesus's words to His disciples: *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* ([Mat 28:20](#)).

St. Patrick's lyrics remind me that Christ is with believers always through His Spirit living within. When I'm nervous or afraid, I can hold fast to His promises that He will never leave me. When I can't fall asleep, I can ask Him to give me His peace. When I'm celebrating and filled with joy, I can thank Him for His gracious work in my life.

Jesus, Immanuel—God with us.

By **Amy Boucher Pye**

**Father God, thank You for sending Your Son to be God with us.
May we experience Your presence this day.**

God's love became Incarnate at Bethlehem.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 8, FRIDAY Mat 2:1-18; Luk 2:21-38

Faithful To The End

Psa 95:6

Simeon and Anna were two elderly, righteous, God-fearing people, both well advanced in years. Both looked for the redemption of Israel and when the Child was brought to the temple, both recognized Him as the long awaited Messiah. Unlike the shepherds who had the angels, and the wise men who had the star, they received no outward guidance. What they had was inward revelation from the Holy Spirit as to where and when to go and see the Child.

What can we learn from Simeon and Anna to help us develop a deeper understanding of our relationship with God?

The first lesson we can learn is that Simeon, *'just and devout'* and Anna who *'served God with fasting and prayer'* were sensitive to the voice of God. They had spent years in the presence of God, worshipping and praying and when God called, they heard and made themselves available. We are not likely to hear God's voice unless we live in God's will, in righteousness and devotion.

Secondly, at no point in their lives did they lose their hope that they would see the Messiah. They had waited 50 to 60 long years and God honored them. Sometimes we give up too easily. We may have been praying for years but when things don't go our way, we give up and lose the blessing that God has for us.

The final lesson we can learn is that the Holy Spirit can speak to us and show us things that others cannot know or understand. With earthly eyes both saw a Baby that was no different from other babies but with spiritual eyes they saw the Son of God. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual insight into the ordinary things around us, and of the truths in God's word. The only way we can do this is to experience Him in all His fullness.

***'Teach me, my God and King. In all things Thee to see
And what I do in anything, to do it as for Thee.'***

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 9, SATURDAY

Mat 2:19-23; Luk 2:41-52

The Perfect Child

Luk 2:52

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. Luk 2:52

A God-fearing Christian mother had problems with her teenage son. He was lazy, bad-tempered, a cheat, liar and a thief. He became a well-known lawyer but ambition, money and women dominated his life. The mother continued to pray for her son. One day, she saw the light of Christ in him. She waited. At the age of thirty-two, he gave his life to Jesus. St. Augustine went on to become one of the greatest theologians of the church.

In many Asian Christian homes, the catchword is 'academic excellence'. Parents perceive this as the 'open sesame' to go up the corporate ladder and future financial success. Obsessed with grades, they spend a huge amount of time and energy ferrying their children to tuition classes. God is given the back seat. It is not surprising that children grow up in one direction and lag in another. The children may become academic achievers but remain social misfits, physical giants but continue to be spiritual pygmies.

In the home in Nazareth, all the necessities of life were provided for. Lovingly nurtured by Mary and Joseph. Jesus developed physically (stature), intellectually (wisdom) socially (favor with men) and spiritually (favor with God). He showed perfect, balanced growth, a testament to excellent parenting.

In the temple in Jerusalem, the 12-year-old Jesus showed a highly intelligent grasp of what was being said (v.46), yet He did not attempt to instruct the teachers of the law. He showed the correct attitude of a well-brought up young person. At the age of twelve. He knew He had to be in His Father's house, yet although Mary and Joseph did not understand what He meant, the wise and obedient child went back with them and was subject to them. His sense of obligation to put God first did not mean disobedience to His earthly parents.

If we are to have better-balanced young people, we need stable homes with God-fearing, upright parents. Their love for God and His word and their proper response to affluence will be reflected in their children.

Food for thought: If Jesus came today, would He choose to live in your home. If no, why not?

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 10, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

JAN 11, MONDAY Mat 3:1-12; Mar 1:1-8; Luk 3:1-20; Joh 1:15-28

No Compromise

Mar 1:3

As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet "A voice of one calling in the desert. 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'". Luk 3:4

John the Baptist had no regard for the organized society of his day. The message that He declared was blunt and uncompromising.

He was a lone voice crying in the wilderness and the messenger of God's choice. A beacon of courage and fearlessness, he refused to buckle under the political and religious pressures of his day. In the wilderness where he had been schooled, God had been his only companion and teacher, and when he came out. he was fully committed to God. God had his full allegiance.

Compromise is something we do so easily because it is the easiest way out of difficult situations. It begins in small ways in everyday common situations and continues into the more complex areas where justice, truth telling etc. are compromised.

How often have we, in the presence of non-Christian friends, compromised on simple issues? We may give full allegiance to other people and man-made institutions because we are afraid to be different. Our great concern is to be accepted socially. We go by the principle that 'everybody is doing it so it must be okay for us to do it'. But Paul says to the Roman Christians, 'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Rom 12:2) and again to the Philippian Christians. 'our citizenship is in heaven' (Phi 3:20). The Christian owes his ultimate allegiance to God and if something a person or institution says conflicts with God's will, then it becomes imperative for the Christian to take a stand. It is loyalty to the kingdom of God even unto death. It is true that when we make our stand we may lose a few friends and make a lot of enemies. But the true Christian will not worry too much about that.

**In what areas of your life have you compromised and disobeyed God's word?
Ask the Lord for forgiveness and the strength to stand for His truth and righteousness.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 12, TUESDAY Mat 3:13-17; Mar 1:9-11; Luk 3:21-22; Joh 1:29-34

Preparation – Three Important Voices

Mat 3:15

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
 Mat 3:17

Most families prepare months ahead for the great event - a wedding! Sometimes it is necessary to book a hotel for the dinner at least a year in advance.

In this chapter we read of the preparations that were made for the greatest event in history - the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Firstly, we hear the voice of John the Baptist, who was fulfilling the prophecy of Isa 40:3. He was calling on the people to prepare the way of the Lord by repenting of their sins. Repentance is not merely being sorry but it involves a change of heart and a turning away from sin. In Mar 1:4 we are told that *'John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.'* Many confessed their sins and were baptized by John in the river Jordan.

Jesus came to John and requested baptism. John tried to deter Him but Jesus replied, *'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness'* (v.15). Although sinless, Jesus was identifying Himself with those who were going to repent and be baptized.

The Holy Spirit was in Jesus Christ from the moment of His conception. Now the heavens open and the Spirit of God alights on Him. Having heard the voice of John the Baptist and Jesus, we now hear the voice of God the Father saying, *'This is My Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'* What an encouragement to us, to know that Jesus, whom we love, is truly the Son of God!

**Each day brings with it events both big and small -but all are equally important.
 Let us, throughout the day, seek to be prepared for what God has in store for us.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 13, WEDNESDAY Mat 4:1-11; Mar 1:12-13; Luk 4:1-13

No Short Cuts

Mat 4:4, 7 & 10

"It is written . it is written ... it says ..." Luk 4:4, 8, 12

The temptation(s) of Jesus in the wilderness was as much a triumph of identifying temptation as it was of overcoming it.

Jesus was hungry after fasting forty days in a dry land. Food was a legitimate need. But He rebuked Satan for saying He should take (or make) some bread. Jesus knew the time for bodily discipline and chastening had not yet ended.

Jesus was about to face great suffering to inaugurate a worldwide kingdom. There were less painful ways to have one's own kingdom, authority and splendor. Satan's way was tempting: "You get the world and all the power to change it - I just want you to give me the same reverence I already get from everyone else." But Jesus decided He would only do what His Father had laid down before Him.

Satan offered Scriptural proof of God's ever-present shielding from harm, even as he challenged Jesus to force God's safeguarding hand. Jesus replied, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

The temptations to shortcut the discipline of body, mind and spirit, to compromise with less painful alternatives, to insist that God must intervene at our commands - Jesus overcame these by obeying God and His word.

Have we undergone adequate disciplining of the body, mind and spirit, or have we been lazy? Have we heard the voice of God directing us towards a difficult path and closed our eyes, preferring less painful alternatives? Do we walk in faith, or have we been demanding improper substantiation of God's presence?

<p>P.R.A.Y</p>	<p>PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL</p>
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JAN 14, THURSDAY

Joh 1:35-51

John's Disciples Following Jesus

Joh 1:39

"Can you tell me where I can find the lightbulbs?"

"Sure. Come with me, and I'll take you to them."

In many large stores, employees are instructed to take customers to find what they are looking for rather than simply giving them verbal directions. This common act of courtesy and walking alongside an inquiring person may help us expand our concept of what it means to lead others to Christ.

In Joh 1, the phrase *"come and see"* occurs twice. When two curious disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus where He was staying, the Lord said, *"Come and see"* (v.39). After spending the day with Him, Andrew found his brother, Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus (v.40-41). Later, Philip told Nathanael he had found the Messiah. To Nathanael's skeptical reply, Philip said, *"Come and see"* (v.46).

Witnessing for Christ can be a one-time event when we speak the good news about Him to others. But it may also involve walking alongside people who are seeking help and wholeness. Our genuine interest in their spiritual welfare, our prayers, and our involvement with them say without words, *"Come and see. Let's walk together, and I'll take you to Him."*

By **David C. McCasland**

**The gospel has to be proclaimed, Its truth we need to share;
But sometimes seekers also need, To see how much we care. —Sper**

Kindness and compassion have led more people to Christ than proclamation alone.

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

Do Whatever He Tells You

Joh 2:9b

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Joh 2:5

Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding in Cana. He saved the host from embarrassment by turning water into wine. But let us pay heed to the words of Mary and the obedience of the servants.

Mary knew that Jesus was not merely her son, but the Son of God. That was why she immediately approached Jesus when the wine ran out. What she said to the servants has very strong implications. 'Do whatever He tells you,' means that whatever Jesus says, whether it seems logical or not should be obeyed. Those servants could have scoffed at Mary's ridiculous suggestion. But because they did not, they had the privilege of witnessing a miracle.

As we encounter life's problems, do we believe the words of Scripture wholeheartedly? Do we truly believe the promise in Pro 3:5, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding'? The older we are, the richer we get, the smarter we become, the harder it is for us to respond like the servants in Cana to what God says to us. At times we become skeptical and lack the faith to follow God's ways. Or we may rationalize and use 'our own understanding' to find solutions in our own way.

When God speaks to you. do whatever He tells you.

**Show us Your ways. Lord, that we may walk with You.
Help us to walk by faith, not by sight.**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 16, SATURDAY Joh 3:1-21

Nicodemus

Joh 3:3

A few years ago a publisher made a big mistake. A book had been on the market for several years, so it was time for a makeover. The author rewrote the book to bring it up to date. But when the revision was published, there was a problem. The publisher gave the book a nice new cover but printed the old book inside. The exterior was fresh and new, but the interior was old and out of date. This “reprint” was not really new at all.

Sometimes that kind of thing happens with people. They realize a change needs to be made in life. Things are heading in the wrong direction. So they may put on a new exterior without making a vital change in their heart. They may change a behavior on the outside but may not realize that it is only God who can change us on the inside.

In Joh 3, Nicodemus sensed that because Jesus came “from God” (v.2) He offered something very different. What Jesus told Nicodemus made him realize that He offered nothing short of a rebirth (v. 4): He needed to be “born again,” to be made totally new (v.7). That change comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. That’s when “the old has gone, the new is here” (2 Co 5:17). Do you need a change? Put your faith in Jesus. He’s the one who changes your heart and makes all things new.

By **Dave Branon**

**Lord, I now know that changes on the outside—behavior, looks, attitude—don’t change me inside. I put my faith in Jesus, who died on the cross and rose again to forgive my sins.
Make me new on the inside—in my soul.
How has your life been changed by Jesus? Share it with your DG.**

Only God can make us new.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 17, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

JAN 18, MONDAY Mat 4:12; Mar 1:14; Luk 3:19-20; Joh 3:22-36

He Must Become Greater

Joh 3:30

"He must become greater; / must become less. "Joh 3:30

When John the Baptist's disciples came to him to report that many had gone to see Jesus to be baptized, his reply was not what they expected. Remarkably, John wasn't concerned about the smaller crowds that came to hear him when Jesus was preaching in the same district. Earlier, he had declared. "Look, the Lamb of God. who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him. but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel" (1:29-31).

Instead of envy, John was full of joy. His great joy was that Jesus was the greater, and he himself less. John's attitude protected him from the Christian's greatest temptation: pride. Many have fallen because of pride when they compare themselves with others. Some become envious when they see others doing better than themselves. Some become boastful when they know they are greater than others.

The apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 13. 'Love does not envy; it is not boastful'. To the Romans he writes. 'For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you' (Rom 12:3). From these two passages we see two antidotes to keep our pride in check.

Firstly, let God's love rule in our hearts, reminding us that we are who we are today because of His great love and amazing grace. Secondly, we need to always have a careful assessment of ourselves. John was careful not to allow his popularity to make him proud. His reply to his disciples was, 'A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said. 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' He must become greater; I must become less' (v.27- 28,30).

○ Lord, come take your place as President, not a resident, in our lives.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 19, TUESDAY Joh 4:1-42

Out Of The Saltshaker

Joh 4:34

Now he had to go through Samaria. John 4:4

The Jews and the Samaritans were hostile towards each other. The Jews would avoid passing through Samaria which was located between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. They would cross River Jordan to the east and travel along Decapolis although this was a longer route.

But our Lord Jesus, with the mission to win these Samaritans, deliberately went through Samaria so that He could meet the Samaritans. First, He met the woman at the well and then, the other villagers of Sychar.

Bill Hybels, the senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in USA creatively introduced this equation for evangelism: $MI = HP + CP + CC$, taken from Matthew 5 where Jesus calls us to be salt of the earth and light of the world. MI means 'maximum impact'. Christ wants His followers to have maximum impact or influence on unbelievers. HP stands for 'high potency', CP stands for 'close proximity' and CC stands for 'clear communication'. In a nutshell, someone with high potency (HP) has to be willing to get into close proximity (CP) with someone else and clearly communicate (CC) the message of Jesus if maximum influence (MI) is to be exerted.

Our model evangelist, Jesus knew that He could never reach the Samaritans unless He deliberately drew Himself close to them. In spite of the hostility, Jesus went to the territory of the Samaritans.

Many of us have been ineffective in witnessing because we do not have close proximity with unbelievers. Although we have sound theological understanding and are great communicators of the Gospel, we have become too comfortable in our Christian environment. We fail to recognise that Jesus called us to 'go' and preach to the lost.

Many of us have become salt kept in the saltshaker and light kept under a bowl. As salt, we need to be out of the saltshaker to prevent decay and to add flavor to the lives of others. As light, we need to let our light shine before men so that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven.

**O Lord, give us a burning desire to burn brightly in the darkest of places.
Make us Your beacons of hope amongst people who do not yet know You.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 20, WEDNESDAY Mat 4:12-17; Mar 1:14-15; Luk 4:14-30; Joh 4:43-45

Targeting the Least

Luk 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me... to preach good news to the poor ... freedom for the prisoners .. recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luk 4:18-19

I once listened to a blind beggar outside a McDonald's along the glitzy streets of Bangsar. He shared, through tears, about the neglect of blind people in Kuala Lumpur, about how his savings can be taken away any minute, about how his paltry welfare cheques can barely get him past a week. Thus, he has to beg as a supplement, lest he starve.

As Asians we are familiar with the taboos held by our society that alienate those who are deemed 'not whole' or less than the rest. The Jews have their 'unclean, and thus 'outside-the-covenant', groups. As a typical Malaysian yuppie, I also naturally recoil at the sight of poverty, disease, social degradation and retardation.

Yet today's reading reminds me that such people-groups are the primary target of Jesus' ministry. Jesus proclaimed the 'Year of the Lord's favor' (v.19) which was a parallel of the great Jewish Jubilee celebration (Lev 25:8-17) in which debtors were forgiven what they owed and slaves were set free. The poor, the blind, the prisoners - liberation for them was what characterized the great Messianic promise first sounded in Isaiah and now echoing through Jesus' ministry.

God's new dawn, the coming reign of His kingdom, brings with it a display of His sheer sovereign grace in cancelling out the burdens of the least privileged in society. This is no abstract redemption, but real life given abundantly.

The ones least loved by 'normal folk' were the ones God has most compassion for. Are our hearts pierced thus too?

**Who are the key beneficiaries of your ministry or that of your church or Christian group?
 How do you view the least fortunate in your community?
 Do the oppressed, the poor, the blind, etc. feature in any 'mission statement'
 of any church you know of?**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 21, THURSDAY Mat 4:18-22; Mar 1:16-20; Luk 5:1-11

El-Shaddai's Engineers

Mar 1:17

"From now on you will catch men." Luk 5:10b

One of the first things a mother asks her daughter about her new boyfriend is, "What does he do?" Implicitly, 'How much is he making a month?'

Financial adequacy is a non-negotiable in Asian culture. Only rarely will we see, say, a Chinese or Indian family endorsing hippie-like kinds of lifestyles where life is lived for the moment and long-term objectives eschewed.

Jesus' calling of His first disciples is marked by a challenge and a call in the midst of their vocation. It's remarkable to note that had Jesus called His first disciples within a Malaysian setting, the disciples would have caused an uproar and an upheaval within their families. I doubt my Christian parents would approve of me quitting school or my job and following a self-proclaimed messenger of God.

In Jesus' time, the disciples couldn't follow Him without abandoning their daily jobs. And whilst some of us may be called out of our secular vocation, most of us are called to follow Christ within and as part of our careers.

God meets us in the midst of our work, our careers, and asks us to redefine our vocation around His transformative aim: 'I shall make you fishers of men.' Or "Programmers of Peace? 'Engineers for El-Shaddai'? 'Consultants for Compassion'? Wouldn't it be nice to have a spiritual call-card with the title, 'Architects of God's Altruism'?

Whatever the title, our job description will be '**catching men**' for Christ (v.10).

Think about the industry you plan to be in (both now and later).

What aspects encourage authentic humanity? Which elements urgently need redemption?

What can you do to make your profession be of God?

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 22, FRIDAY

Mar 1:21-28; Luk 4:31-37; Joh 4:46-54

Healing - Nobleman's son & Demoniac

Mar 1:17

God sometimes answers our prayers in marvelous ways, but He does not want us to become preoccupied with the miraculous. That's why Jesus gently rebuked the nobleman who begged Him to come and heal his son (Joh 4:48). But in response to the father's repeated appeal He said, "Go your way, your son lives" (v.50). The father came to "believe" on the basis of Jesus' word alone. The reality of his faith is seen in the fact that he obeyed Christ's simple command and "he went his way."

Upon returning home, the nobleman discovered that his son had been healed "at the seventh hour" on the previous day. From his servants he learned exactly what had taken place and when. His son was made well at the same instant that Jesus said, "Your son lives" (v.50-53).

At times we are amazed by God's perfect timing and miraculous intervention when He answers our prayers. We must be careful, though, not to become so preoccupied with the miracle that we forget the One who performed it. **We need to remain focused on Christ, whether a miracle takes place or not.**

Sooner or later we will be called upon to trust God as we endure sickness, grief, or disappointment. That's when "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7).

By **Herbert Vander Lugt**

**Sometimes we see a miracle, And faith in God revives;
Yet eyes of faith can see God's hand At work throughout our lives. —Hess**

Believing is seeing what our eyes cannot see.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 23, SATURDAY Mat 4:23-25, 8:14-17; Mar 1:29-39; Luk 4:38-44

Putting the 'kitchen god' in his Place

Mar 1:35

At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah. Luk 4:40-41

One of the few things which makes Asian culture stand out from Western society (apart from our food) is our preoccupation with the supernatural world. Kitchen gods, leaping Taoist funeral monks, kavadi-bearers and feng shui - we have them all.

Perhaps, therefore, in Asia there is a greater need for teaching concerning the supernatural and the life-giving reality of Christ. Our passage today links exorcism with teaching (v. 36) and healing (v. 40). It shows Jesus launching His war on the powers that would enslave souls in the worst possible way, spiritually.

The kingdom of God is about taking the fight back to the forces of evil, closing them down, planting the divine flag of liberation in what was formerly demonic territory. It is clear that such action formed an integral part of the kingdom of God, as Jesus understood it (v.43).

Realistically speaking, not many of us may be called to cast out demons. But all of us are called to challenge demonically initiated structures, value-systems and institutions and by doing so to restore lives and redeem communities. We can all learn and live (and thereby communicate) the teachings of Jesus to all we come across. We can speak words of healing and do acts of love (which heal in unimaginable ways).

Thus shall we unloose the chains of feng shui and put the kitchen god in his place - under the feet of the true God.

**What is the one uniquely Asian festival or practice which disturbs you the most spiritually?
Talk to a pastor or other Christian friends about it.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 24, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

JAN 25, MONDAY Mat 8:1-4, 23-27; Mar 1:40-45, 4:35-41; Luk 5:12-16, 8:22-25

Facing the Storms of Life

Mar 4:39

The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. Luk 8:24

Jesus fell asleep. A long day and the gentle rocking motion of the boat would make anybody fall asleep. A sudden squall blew up. This was nothing unusual on the Sea of Galilee and nothing fishermen (5:1-3) could not handle. But this was no ordinary storm. This was big. The disciples panicked. They turned to Jesus. Surely the master will save them.

And Jesus did. He stilled the storm. In the ensuing calm came a gentle rebuke. Where is your faith?' (v.25). Did not the disciples have faith? Of course they had otherwise they would not have woken Jesus up. But they did not have the faith in God that Jesus had. The future church will need that faith. The disciples went through this storm and they learnt that this man who needs sleep like us is also so unlike us. He is more than man.

The storms of life can come upon us suddenly. In 1978 a truck ploughed into a minibus in central Thailand. Five missionaries, seven missionary children and three unborn babies were killed outright. The survivors were rushed to Manorom Christian Hospital. Bryan Parry, a missionary surgeon, prepared to operate. He had just learned that his own wife and daughters were among the dead. And operate he did. Where did he find the strength to operate as his own personal tragedy hung heavy over him? He found it in his Lord Jesus Christ. When you go through your storm with Jesus in your boat, you will have your own extraordinary story to tell. For Jesus is not just man; He is also the Son of God. He is sufficient for your storms.

**We naturally want to avoid the storms of life. But God is in the storm with us.
We can therefore go through it and come out the stronger.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 26, TUESDAY Mat 8:28-34; Mar 5:1-20; Luk 8:26-39

The Demons Submit to Jesus

Luk 8:39

And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. Luk 8:31

The storm stilled, the journey continues. They land on the other side of the Lake in the region of the Gadarenes. They are met by a demoniac. Now the disciples will see that the One who commands the storm can also command the demons (v.29). Who is this? He is the Son of God; even the demons recognize Him (v.28). The legion of demons is dispatched into the pigs. They commit suicide. The man exorcised and cleansed becomes normal again. This is very newsworthy- demons, mad man healed, suicidal pigs and great economic loss (v.34).

These happenings affect people in various ways. The disciples have a new angle to their question, 'Who is this?' (v.25b). The pig herders are shocked. The healed man is grateful. The people of the region are scared - they want Jesus to leave.

So Jesus leaves but He has not given up on them. How do we know? Because Jesus did not allow the healed man to follow Him. Instead, He tells him to return home and tell his people what God has done for him. The man does more than that. He tells the whole town (v.39b).

We all have our encounters with the living God. It may not necessarily be demon exorcism. You may have a different experience with God. An answered prayer. A healing. Protection from harm and evil. Clear guidance. If you live among people who reject Jesus, know for a fact that Jesus has not rejected them. He wants you to go and tell them your story and about what God has done for you.

**Pray for the people you know who are hostile to or are fearful of Jesus Christ.
Pray that they will know Christ is not to be feared or hated.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

Question: "Why are there two demon-possessed men in the Gerasene tombs in Matthew, but only one in Mark and Luke?"

The three passages that describe the incident with the demoniacs in the country of the Gerasenes, also called Gadarenes, are [Mat 8:28-34](#), [Mar 5:1-20](#), and [Luk 8:26-39](#). The Matthew account mentions two demon-possessed men, while Mark and Luke only mention one. Is there a discrepancy in these accounts, and do the Gospel writers contradict one another?

The first thing to determine is whether the three writers are describing the same event. The timing of the event in all three accounts—immediately following the calming of the storm on the sea of Galilee—as well as other similarities (living in the tombs, the ferocity of the demoniac, the conversation with the demons, the driving of them into the pigs, the drowning of the herd, and the response of those who witnessed the scene) all give credence to Matthew, Mark, and Luke all describing the same event. The question remains, then, whether there was one demoniac or two.

Matthew tells us there were two demoniacs, while Mark and Luke only mention one of the two. It is unclear why they chose to mention only one, but that does not negate the possibility of a second demoniac being present. Mark and Luke do not say there was "only one" demon-possessed man. They simply state that one of the two met Jesus and spoke to Him. For whatever reason, Matthew simply gives us more information than Mark and Luke.

In any case, no contradiction exists. A contradiction occurs only if one statement makes the other impossible and there is absolutely no way for them to be reconciled.

For example, let's say we put two apples on a table.

Statement 1: There are two apples on the table.

Statement 2: There is only one apple on the table.

These two statements contradict each other.

Now read these two statements:

Statement 1: There are two apples on the table.

Statement 2: There is an apple on the table.

These two statements do not contradict each other.

In the same way, the biblical accounts do not represent a contradiction.

- All three accounts describe demon possession and the power that Jesus has over the spirit world.
- All three tell us that He made a point to cross the sea to save someone from the demons.
- All three affirm that there was at least one man who was plagued by demons.

The fact that the three accounts differ in some minor details only proves that they were written by three different authors, each of whom chose to focus on a different aspect of the account.

JAN 27, WEDNESDAY Mat 9:18-26; Mar 5:21-43; Luk 8:40-56

Your Faith has Healed You

Luk 8:50

Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."
Luk 8:50

Who gained most from this episode? At twelve years, it is too young to die. Jairus is desperate but there is hope. Jesus is in town. The crowds parted for this important man. 'Jesus, please come and heal my daughter.' 'Yes.' His hopes raised, Jairus pushes through the crowd. Jesus follows. Little does Jairus know they will arrive to find his daughter dead. They push through the mass of humanity. Suddenly, a delay. Jairus worries. Jesus has felt power go out from Him.

Who touched me? (v.45). Peter thinks it is a ridiculous question (v. 45b). But Jesus wants to know the person. He does not deal with anonymous persons. Fearfully, a woman owns up. Twelve years is too long to remain ill. The crowds had not parted for this 'nobody'. But this woman has extraordinary faith. Pushing through arms, legs and bodies, she had managed to touch Jesus' cloak. She was healed. 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace' (v.48). Relationship established.

Jairus witnessed everything. And his worst fears were realized for at that moment bad news came (v.49). Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher any more' (v.49b). For a lot of us, death is so final. The delay has done its work. But with the Son of God, death is not the end. 'Don't be afraid, just believe... may not be very reassuring to many people but to one who had seen the woman healed just a few minutes ago, it was reassuring. He had help to have faith. The one who gained the most was Jairus.

Perhaps you are facing a desperate situation now. Be assured that Jesus cares for us (1 Pe 5:7). Remember the blessings and care you received in the past. They are aids to faith. What Jesus did for the woman and for Jairus, He can do for you too. And His healing comes in different forms.

Faith is not just for healing. Faith is trusting in a good God who wants our highest good.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 28, THURSDAY Mat 9:1-13, 27-34; Mar 2:1-17 ; Luk 5:1-32

Who are the Healthy? Who are the Sick?

Luk 5:31-32

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luk 5:32

Today's reading features the Pharisees questioning Jesus, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" The key subjects are tax collectors and sinners i.e. the outcasts of ancient Jewish society. Not entirely unlike gays and lesbians, the outcasts of modern Christian communities.

The passage today reminds us of a key principle in the way Jesus lived and ministered: He cared for and welcomed those who had been despised by society's gate-keepers.

It appears, therefore, that the more we are tempted to condemn and brand as unclean various groups of people, the more we make them objects of Jesus' ministry. The 'sicker' we feel people are, the more we should be sending the love of Christ their way. Our judgments make them targets for the grace of God.

But there's a note of irony in Jesus' comment about having come only for the sick and not the righteous. Think about it: Who among us can be said to be absolutely righteous? Who amongst us is not in need of some form of spiritual healing?

Is it not possible, therefore, that Jesus' comment (in verse 32) is meant to expose the faulty categories employed by the Pharisees themselves - as if they were "healthy" and everyone else 'sick'?

And are we making the same mistakes today?

Which group of people would you feel outrage, disgust or shock at seeing Jesus fellowshiping with? Why? Then re-read the passage above. And think again.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 29, FRIDAY Mat 9:14-17; Mar 2:18-22; Luk 5:33-39; Joh 5:1-15

Eyes To See

Joh 5:6b

At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath. Joh 5:9

The pool of Bethesda was a gathering place for the disabled who believed in the healing power of the water. In this account, the focus is on the paralyzed man. He had been hopeless and helpless for 38 years.

When Jesus came, He offered the man both hope and help. When Jesus asked, 'Do you want to get well?' and then instructed him. 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk', all the man needed was faith in Jesus' words. He obeyed and was healed (v.6-9).

A miracle had just happened. A paralyzed man was healed. But the Jews, especially the religious leaders, were upset and furious with the man for picking up his mat on a Sabbath day. They deemed that to be equivalent to 'work'.

They were blind to the power of God that was demonstrated right before their eyes. Their preoccupation with the requirements of the law caused them not to see God's power and love at work in the life of the paralyzed man.

What about us? Are we also so preoccupied with 'rules' and 'traditions' that we fail to see the power of God at work in the events and lives around us? We need to recognize that the same Son of God who performed a miracle at the pool of Bethesda some two thousand years ago can still do the same today.

**Lord, help us to see You working in and around us even in our times.
Open our eyes to Your never ending power, Father.
Give us seeing eyes and a believing heart.**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 30, SATURDAY

Mat 12:1-8; Mar 2:23-28; Luk 6:1-5; Joh 5:16-47

God's Kind of Life

Joh 5:19

'I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.' Joh 5:24

I came across an acronym for the word 'Gospel' - God Offers Sinful People Eternal Life. Jesus the Son of God said, 'Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life' (v.24).The 'eternal life' that Jesus promises has both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Many understand eternal life to be life forever - a quantitative aspect. In other words, believers in Christ will continue living for eternity. Jesus said to Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die' (Joh 11:25). He implies that those who believe in Him will be resurrected. Death cannot put an end to our lives. The apostle Paul echoes this in I Corinthians 15:55, 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'

The qualitative aspect of our eternal life is even more glorious. When we believe in Christ, He gives us a totally different quality of life. Eternal life is God's kind of life. We who believe can live out such a life because it is God living in us and through us. He lives in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is God Himself. He will convict us of our sins, guide us into all truth and empower us to live the abundant life - the eternal life. Read 2 Pet 1:3-4.

With the Holy Spirit in our lives, God has made it possible for us to live a kind of life that by ourselves would have been impossible to live.

**Lord, help us rejoice in Your infinite wisdom and plans for our lives.
Help us grow to know You more day by day.**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

JAN 31, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

FEB 1, MONDAY

Mat 12:9-21; Mar 3:1-12; Luk 6:6-11

Outlawing Laws which Kill

Mar 3:4

"I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" Luk 6:9

In the Chinese community, life and death shouldn't mix. If, for example, you're about to get married and your mother-in-law to be were to pass away, you should avoid the funeral. Don't even go near. Why? Because such occasions bring 'bad-luck'. Life and death must remain separate.

Look at it from the groom-to-be's perspective: Your mother has died, but your bride-to-be can neither mourn with you nor be at the funeral. She cannot be with you at your time of need because to do so would invite misfortune.

In all cultures, man-made pseudo-spiritual laws and practices have been a source of oppression and dehumanization. To the Pharisees, narrow interpretations of 'not working on the Sabbath' were more important than relieving hunger (v.1-5) and giving new life to dead limbs (v.6-11). Furthermore, that someone should defy these humanity-burdening laws was a source of anger, scheming and premeditated murder (v.11).

Such is the state of fallen humanity: Not only do we create ruinous rules which 'do evil and destroy life' (v.9), we also plot the ruin of those who point out their foolish and victimizing nature. Even granted that the Sabbath had roots in God's historical actions (e.g. creation) and laws, Jesus had no qualms subordinating legalistic issues to meeting basic human needs.

The Son of Man, who is also Lord of the Sabbath, calls us to reject soul-killing laws and redeem the world by, not least, reminding people of what their priorities should be. There is a higher moral law of love which supersedes ceremonial niceties.

**Think about the cultural practices you are most familiar with.
Reflect too on practices in the office, on the road, in politics, in the marketplace, etc.
Which encourage community and relationships and which create fear?**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 2, TUESDAY Mat 10:1-4; Mar 3:13-19; Luk 6:12-16

Loved of God

Mar 3:13-14 (BWJ Anchor Verse)

He chose Simon... the Zealot...and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. Luk 6:15-16

Thank God, Jesus isn't like Donald Trump. Or like most managers in our country, especially Human Resource managers. Because if He was, Simon (not Peter) and Judas wouldn't have been a part of His team.

Both had serious black marks about them. One was a zealot (not exactly God's model of compassionate love to enemies), the other a traitor. Include the highly temperamental Peter (who decided to dispossess the high priest's servant of his ear at Gethsemane) and a full 25% of Jesus' apostles wouldn't have achieved a Very Satisfactory rating in today's annual appraisals.

There's something about the delinquent, the maladjusted, the erratic and the impulsive which Jesus loves. Maybe, it's their passionate belief in and search for something better in the world. Maybe, it's their sorrow over the status quo. Maybe, it's their trigger-happy eagerness to see God doing something powerful.

Whatever we say about a zealot, a traitor or an emotional impulsive person, we cannot say they do not care about the outcomes. Perhaps, that's it: Jesus yearns for people who long for something new and something greater. They long for it so much that, unfortunately, they may take undesirable or unhealthy steps to achieve it. Jesus saw the fire in their hearts and sought to make it burn brightly and purposefully after His own heart.

Still, let's not be too 'harsh' on them, especially Judas. For though most of us believe we are God's elect and chosen people, have we not also been 'traitors' of His kingdom in a real sense? God has chosen us, but we have nevertheless, on many occasions, chosen against Him. Yet, we believe He continues to love us (don't we?).

Make a list of people you know who are of low or questionable repute. Think hard about them. Have a (or more) conversation(s) with them. Is there an eagerness about them we may have missed? What can we learn from their lives, their questions, their work?

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 3, WEDNESDAY Mat 5:1-12; Lk 6:17-26

The Gospel for Society's Least

Mat 5:12

"Blessed are you who are poor ... you who hunger now...you who weep now ..."
 Luk 6:20-21

For the larger part of my Christian life, I thought that Christianity's primary concerns were about the afterlife, about one's 'personal relationship with God', about striving for holiness and avoiding sin. For over two decades, the issue of playing a pertinent role in transforming the society and ministering to the least and the outcasts in my community was at best a secondary footnote.

Jesus says that blessed are those who are experiencing poverty, hunger, sorrow, persecution (verbal or otherwise), rejection - for it shall all be undone one day. The kingdom He came to inaugurate is, among other things, about reversing the hell and hardships in society. Our Lord is doing what the church sadly doesn't do very often or very well: give hope to the least in society. And who are the agents of this hopeful reversal? Read the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6:17-49) and ask: Did Jesus not expect the impact of personal renewal from following His commandments to 'flow out' into the wider community outside the church? More specifically, would Jesus be satisfied if the church was praising God and having a 'fellowship luncheon' in a particular building whilst outside hundreds are starving?

For too long, societal transformation has been languishing at the bottom of the church's agenda when in fact it should be among her highest priorities. The people of salvation are called to undo Satan's soul-crushing work.

The children of God must be bringers of hope and joyous laughter (v 21).

Consider the following items:

- 1) Post-Death Bliss
- 2) Service
- 3) Character Improvement
- 4) Sin Management/Avoidance
- 5) Social Transformation.

Which would you think Christians have traditionally emphasized, from most to least?

What would you think is the Christian's priorities, from highest to lowest? Why?

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 4, THURSDAY Mat 5:21-48; Luk 6:27-36

The Kingdom Way

Mat 5:48

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." Luke 6:27

What if a third of all the members in every church were to practice this commandment twice a week? What if, two times a week, we were to actively show our kindness to the wicked and the ungrateful (v.35)? What if, a few times a month, we gave generously to those who hate us and would like to see us destroyed, and gave without expecting to get anything back (v.35)?

Wouldn't such actions cause a ripple so powerful in our society and social order? Wouldn't people sense and know there was something special happening in their midst?

To the godless, such acts are foolish. To the money-minded, to do so would invite dents in their profits. To the selfish, to work for peace at one's expense is a counter-productive approach to life. To the powers that be, this commandment goes counter to everything they stand for.

To the follower of Christ, though, there is something greater at stake than mere reprisal. There is concern for the offender.

Only a people nurtured in kingdom ways can behave this way. And in behaving this way, the reality that God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son to die for it, shines through.

**Does the name of an 'enemy' come to mind?
Ask the Lord's enabling to do a loving deed for him/her this week.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 5, FRIDAY Mat 6:1-18; Luk 11:1-4

Prayer is both Caught and Taught

Mat 6:9-13

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." Luk 11:1

We all know that we ought to pray and many of us struggle with our prayer life. To 'improve' our prayer life, some of us might choose to attend seminars or read books that teach us about what others have discovered about prayer. Some of us reject that approach and prefer to devote more time on simply 'just seeking the Lord' with open and sincere hearts. We may believe that prayer is all about our personal relationship with God and that in time our prayer lives will come alive.

Today's passage reminds us that prayer is both caught and taught. The disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray because they have caught the importance of prayer in His life (v.1). Jesus is pleased at their request and proceeds to teach them 'the Lord's Prayer' (v.2-4). And as Jesus elaborates on prayer, He affirms that it is not just about 'prayer methods' but also about our relationship with God (v.2, 13).

How do we 'catch' and learn about prayer? For a start, we need good models (v.1). A good model can inspire us more than a good book. We can only find inspiring examples if we prioritize coming to pray as a community (v.2-4). We also need to persevere in our prayers (v.5-8). As with all things we hold important, we need to give prayer priority and energy. Last but not least, we need to believe that the God we pray to is our Heavenly Father who loves us and delights in our prayers (v.2, 11-13).

Lord, grant us the humility to learn how to pray. Teach us through Your Holy Scriptures and through the lives of 'pray-ers' in our Christian community.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 6, SATURDAY Mat 6:19-7:6; Luk 6:37-45, 12:22-34

Judge Rightly

Mat 6:24

"Then you will see clearly, to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Luke 6:42

Saying you disagree is difficult. Saying you disapprove is even tougher. Not because you don't possess a point of view, but because it's unfashionable to sound judgmental.

Jesus was forthright and even harsh in His judgments if He needed to be (Matthew 23 has got to be the most politically impolite speech in the Bible!). Throughout Scripture, divine and prophetic pronouncements of sin and condemnations abound. God clearly does not favor an 'anything-goes' mentality, not when it comes to transforming His people into a community characterized by shalom, wholeness and reconciliation.

Such a purpose, however, is no license for us to fire away at the failings and wrongs of others.

Not because there is anything to apologies about the truth, but because there is usually nothing but anger, self-righteousness and lashing out in the hearts of God's imperfect fallen truth-bearers. We are, by nature, hypocrites (v 42). And hypocrites, in order to be a blessing, must first deal with the 5' by 2' plank in their irises, that proverbial board or plank which blocks clear-sightedness and hardens hearts.

We must take away that beam in order to be able to remove the speck lodged in the other party's eye. We must confront what is to be confronted. Yet, this must happen only after we have applied our spiritual Eye-Mo.

Who do you usually get upset with most of the time? What are his/ her failures?

Reflect on your own- usually hidden- sins and ask yourself if you have been fair with this brother or sister.

Can we commit ourselves to first working on our own failures before reprimanding those whose behavior and beliefs we find unacceptable?

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 7, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

FEB 8, MONDAY Mat 7:7-23; Luk 11:5-13, 13:22-30

Will You Be Saved?

Mat 7:7

"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, "Sir, open the door for us." "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Luk 13:24-25

There's a story of two university professors of ethics who over lunch had a deep theological and philosophical discussion over some finer points of an ethical issue. Upon finishing their meal, one professor saw his colleague slipping the cutlery into his coat pocket. Noticing his shocked expression, his colleague merely shrugged his shoulders and said, 'I teach ethics. It doesn't necessarily mean I believe what I teach. And besides, I need the silverware.'

In today's parable the Jews who have rejected Jesus are being contrasted with the Gentiles who have come from afar and are saved because they embraced Jesus (v.29-30). It has an important lesson for us too. In response to Jesus' teaching, someone in the crowd wanted to discuss the important theological issue of salvation (v.22-23). He wanted to discuss an abstract theological matter but Jesus responded by reframing his question to elicit a personal response (v 24).

To illustrate the importance of a personal response, Jesus tells us a parable (v.25-30). In this parable, many were found unable to enter God's house simply because they were too late (v.25). What is striking is that those who came and knocked on the door only to be rejected are shown as genuinely surprised (v.26). But to Jesus, they should not have been surprised because it is by their lack of action that they have 'thrown themselves out' of God's kingdom. They were sadly late and rejected for a reason that could have easily been resolved. They knew who the Master (Jesus) was. They were familiar with His teachings (v.26). They knew about salvation but made no effort, and no personal commitment, to receive and accept the invitation of salvation for themselves.

What many of us lack today is not knowledge of Jesus. What we lack is sufficient effort and commitment to act on what we know. Salvation is offered to us. Let's not talk about it but receive it for ourselves.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 9, TUESDAY Mat 7:24-8:13; Luk 6:46-7:17

Learning From The Pagan Boss

Mat 7:24

"Say the word, and my servant will be healed." Luk 7:7

Faith isn't the domain of any particular class, race or creed. The story of the centurion's remarkable faith was, among other things, a lesson in spiritual humility for Jesus' disciples and (mainly Jewish) audience.

Note that the centurion wasn't only a Gentile - he was a Gentile leader whose duty it was to govern over Jewish territory. He was a pagan boss. But he can teach us a lot about faith:

1. He had never met Jesus (only heard of our Lord, v.3), yet he was sure Jesus could heal i.e. he saw the often-missed connection between, Jesus can heal and 'Jesus can heal me and my people!' (He didn't need confirmation of Jesus' power before trusting Him.)
2. He was a caring master, willing to take desperate measures for those way below him in the social strata, in this case a mere servant. (He had compassion for all.)
3. He was obviously a respected (pagan) leader who developed friendships with Jewish elders and even built their places of worship and publicly demonstrated his love and respect for Jewish territory (v.5); it was the elders who became the centurion's first messengers to Jesus (v.3). (He connected well with the "outsiders' whom he governed.)
4. He accurately 'mapped' Jesus' authority to heal with general principles of power and subordination, applying the incredible insight that the healing can be performed 'from a distance' (v.8). (He intelligently related the spiritual world to the natural political order in his application of faith.)

This is the kind of great faith that Jesus commended and declared non-existent in 'all of Israel' (v.9).

Of the four points above, which do you feel most lacking in?

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

Status Anxiety

Mat 11:12

"Among those born of women there is no-one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" Luk 7:28

Although the desire for status can drive people to become obsessed with self, not all status-oriented practices are negative. For instance, respect for one's elders could be seen as a God-given communal code to foster harmony in families and humility and learning among the young.

Jesus has another point of view: 'No one in history surpasses John the Baptizer, but in the kingdom he prepared you for, the lowliest person is ahead of him. The ordinary and disreputable people who heard John, by being baptized by him into the kingdom, are the clearest evidence; the Pharisees and religious officials would have nothing to do with such a baptism, wouldn't think of giving up their place in line to their inferiors.' (Lk 7:28-30, The Message)

As the people of God, we are called to demonstrate compassion and kindness in His community. It's about pointing the way to truth and God's way, about challenging the powers that be which dehumanize people, about exposing demonic forces wherever we find them. It's about the new work of Christ in our lives.

John came before this new era of God's fresh work in the world. That alone makes anyone aligned to Jesus 'greater than' even he who heralded the coming of the Son of God. In the new order, the 'least' has more status than even the greatest under the old. Status anxiety has no place in the kingdom of God.

Would you consider yourself among the higher or lower 'classes' in your community? What factors might increase/lower your standing in the eyes of others? And how has your understanding of the kingdom of God changed how you approach this issue?

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 11, THURSDAY

Mat 13:-23; Mar 4:1-20; Luk 8:1-15

Being Fruitful

Luk 8:15

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
Luk 8:8

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna were among a group of women who supported Jesus and the disciples from their own means (v.1-3). What a wonderful testimony of love and transformation that the Gospel brings to those who have believed. Has your own life been similarly changed?

Jesus Christ told a parable which was not meant to be understood by the large crowds that came to hear Him (v.10). Even the disciples did not understand so they asked Him what it meant. In His explanation, He tells us that there are various responses to the word of God.

If you thought that this parable applies only to evangelizing the lost you are only half right for the seed is the word of God, not just the Gospel. Christians hear the word of God preached. How do you respond to God's word? Does the devil snatch it away? Do you receive it but do not obey it? Does it fall on deaf ears because you are listening to the world's voices? Or is your heart a good and noble heart that receives God's word and through obedience you become fruitful like Mary, Joanna and Susanna? The fruit in your life can be the fruit of evangelism (Joh 15:16) and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-he will be blessed in what he does."
(Jam 1:22-25)

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 12, FRIDAY Mat 13:24-43; Mar 4:30-34; Luk 13:18-21

In It's Proper Time

Joh 3:3

"Let both grow together until the harvest" Matthew 13:30a

Have you despaired over the evil and wickedness that seems to abound in the world? Bad news appears to overwhelm good news in the news media. Brutal robberies and rape, people losing their life savings to scams, corruption at all levels of society - and that is only on the local front.

On the international level, it is rare for a day to pass without another report of a natural disaster, a political upheaval within a nation or another escalation of tension between nations. Is God doing anything at all? Are things out of control?

Jesus' teaching addresses these questions. The parable of the wheat and the weeds reminds us that God knows exactly what is happening in the world today. While it may seem that the good suffer and the bad prosper and sometimes it is even difficult to tell who or what is good or bad, God knows all and in His time the good will be victorious and the bad destroyed.

Is God doing anything? Jesus assures us that He is. A mustard seed is so small that it is usually insignificant and unnoticed; yeast is also 'hidden' in a lump of dough. But under proper conditions and at their proper time, both will reveal their presence in a magnitude that cannot be ignored.

So it will be in God's time. While it may seem to us that God is not doing anything about the evil in the world, we can be assured that He is. His ways may be 'hidden' to us today, but all will be revealed at the right time.

Read Psalm 75. Note that our perplexities today were shared by others in Israel's history. Trepidation turns to trust (v 16) when the psalmist sees things from God's perspective. Pray that God will help us see as He sees. Let us respond to Him in worship and trust.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 13, SATURDAY Mat 13:44-52; Mar 4:21-29; Luk 8:16-18

Candle, Seed & Hidden Treasure

Mar 4:24b

John and Mary were walking their dog on their property when they stumbled on a rusty can partially unearthed by recent rains. They took the can home and opened it, discovering a cache of gold coins over a century old! The couple returned to the spot and located seven more cans containing 1,427 coins in all. Then they protected their treasure by reburying it elsewhere.

The cache of coins (valued at \$10 million) is called the Saddle Ridge Hoard, the largest find of its kind in US history. The story is strikingly reminiscent of a parable Jesus told: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Mat 13:44).

Tales of buried treasure have captured imaginations for centuries, though such discoveries rarely happen. But Jesus tells of a treasure accessible to all who confess their sins and receive and follow Him (Joh 1:12).

We'll never come to an end of that treasure. As we leave our old lives and pursue God and His purposes, we encounter His worth. Through "the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:7), God offers us treasure beyond imagination—new life as His sons and daughters, new purpose on earth, and the incomprehensible joy of eternity with Him.

By James Banks

**How are you treasuring your relationship with God?
How can you share that treasure with others?**

You are my greatest treasure, Jesus. I praise You for giving Your life for me on the cross, so that I could find forgiveness and new life in You.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

What is the origin of Valentine's Day 14th February, and should Christians celebrate it?

The first Valentine was posted around 1806. Almost one billion Valentine's Day cards are sent each year on or near February 14 with females purchasing 85% of the cards. This is second only to the number of Christmas cards sent. The history is somewhat murky as to how Valentine's Day has come to be what we now know and celebrate. Saint Valentine served in third-century Rome. Emperor Claudius decided that single men made better soldiers. Therefore, Claudius banned soldiers from being married. One version of the story is that Valentine continued to perform the weddings of young soldiers who were in love, and Claudius had Valentine imprisoned. While imprisoned, Valentine reportedly fell in love with the jailer's daughter. Valentine sent her a card and signed it, "Love, your Valentine."

Another version is that Valentine defied Claudius by helping Christians escape the torture of the Romans.

Valentine died in approximately A.D. 270. Others claim the church may have decided to celebrate in mid February to "Christianize" the pagan Roman celebration Lupercalia.

The first Valentine sent in the United States was in the 1840's by Esther Howgald. Most of us enjoy "spoiling" a loved one on Valentine's Day. Sending gifts and cards conveys love, affection, and friendship.

There is no biblical reason why Christians should not celebrate Valentine's Day by giving their loved ones flowers, candy and/or cards. As with celebrating any holiday, the decision should be between the individual and God. Some people feel very strongly that observing any secular holiday is wrong, while others see it as harmless. The important thing to remember is that celebrating or not celebrating holidays should not be a cause for pride or division among Christians.

FEB 14, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

FEB 15, MONDAY Mat 12:46–50, 13:53–58; Mar 3:31–35, 6:1-6; Luk 8:19–21

Christ's Family Members

Joh 4:34

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." Luk 8:21

In the Gospel of John, Jesus calls Himself the light of the world (Joh 8:12) and He says all who 'put your trust in the light ... become sons of light' (Joh 12:36). Light dispels darkness so that all things hidden in darkness may be seen. The metaphor of Jesus Christ as light is apt for He came into a world darkened by sin.

If we are children of light we must consider how we listen. Jesus Christ did not say consider what we are to hear. People hear many things and so do we. Some people hear and then forget. That is alright most of the time as many things in this information age are better forgotten.

When Jesus tells us to consider how we listen, He is referring to the manner of our hearing. Some people hear something and ignore it, some forget, some hear and retain it.

Some people hear and obey and this is what Jesus Christ would have us do: to hear and then obey. If we obey. we become His 'mother and his brothers' (v.21). If we hear and do not obey, we are like those who light a lamp and hide it in a jar or put it under a bed (v.16).

What about you and me? Are you a son (or daughter) of light? Are you a brother (or mother) of Jesus Christ? It does not matter whether we are called mothers or brothers of Jesus or sons of light. What is important is that we are related to Jesus Christ because we believe in Him and we put into practice what we hear. Consider how you listen.

Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.'
- John H Sammis, 1887 -

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 16, TUESDAY Mat 10:5-11:1; Mar 6:7-13, 30-32; Luk 9:1-6

Continuing the Work of Christ

Mar 6:31b

If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." Luk 9:5

Something was astir. A band of twelve men was healing and preaching the kingdom of God. 'Who is this...?' (v.9). Herod wanted to know the main person. The disciples had asked the same question (8:25b). And Luke's answer was that this is One who drives out demons, heals the sick, raises the dead and commands the winds and the waves. And the demons fear Him (8:1-5b).

It was this same man who sent this band out with power and authority and provision to do the same and to proclaim the kingdom of God (v.1-3). Indeed the kingdom of God has come for one stronger than the demons is here (11:20-22).

Jesus calls and sends us out today with the same power and authority and provision (Mat 28:18, Act 1:8) to do the same work. Hudson Taylor was sent to China. The China Inland Mission (CIM) was started in 1860 through the passionate work of Taylor. The CIM story is a testimony of faith and courage and the provision of the God who sends us out. Consider this. "As to finances and personal support, the CIM missionaries were offered no set salary but rather were to depend entirely on God for their needs. To avoid even the appearance of relying on human resources, offerings and other forms of direct appeals for money were strictly taboo.'

You don't have to go to China. And you don't have to cause a stir. Right where you are - in your neighborhood, in your workplace, in your school, even in your home, you can go about quietly doing the work of the kingdom of God.

**The church has work to do before she reaches heaven.
It is to continue the work of Jesus Christ.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

What is the meaning of LENT?

Lent is a period of fasting, moderation, and self-denial traditionally observed by Catholics and some Protestant denominations. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with Easter Sunday. The length of the Lenten fast was established in the 4th century as 46 days (40 days, not counting Sundays). During Lent, participants eat sparingly or give up a particular food or habit. It's not uncommon for people to give up smoking during Lent, or to swear off watching television or eating candy or telling lies. It's six weeks of self-discipline.

Lent began as a way for Christians to remind themselves of the value of repentance. The austerity of the Lenten season was seen as similar to how people in the Old Testament fasted and repented in sackcloth and ashes (Esther 4:1-3; Jeremiah 6:26; Daniel 9:3).

However, over the centuries Lenten observances have developed a much more "sacramental" value. Some Christians believe that giving something up for Lent is a way to attain God's blessing. But the Bible teaches that grace cannot be earned; grace is "the gift of righteousness" (Rom 5:17). Also, Jesus taught that fasting should be done discreetly: "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen" (Mat 6:16-18). Jesus' command to "wash your face" seems to conflict with the practice of rubbing ashes on one's face on Ash Wednesday.

Fasting can be a good thing, and God is pleased when we repent of sinful habits. There's absolutely nothing wrong with setting aside some time to focus on Jesus' death and resurrection. However, repenting of sin is something we should be doing every day of the year, not just for the 46 days of Lent.

If a Christian wishes to observe Lent, he is free to do so. The key is to focus on repenting of sin and consecrating oneself to God. Lent should not be a time of boasting of one's sacrifice or trying to earn God's favor or increasing His love. God's love for us could not be any greater than it already is.

FEB 17, ASH WEDNESDAY Mat 14:1-12; Mar 6:14-29; Luk 9:7-9

We Bear His Name

Mar 6:20a

Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias. Mat 14:3

What comes to mind when you think of an ideal ruler or king? Well, I think of one who is noble in thought, morally beyond reproach in his ways and dignified in behavior. I envision one who is decisive, wise and just in decision-making and above all, one who has the good of his subjects at heart. Sadly, almost none of the above characteristics were seen in Herod the Tetrarch.

When Herod the Great died, the rule of the kingdom was divided among his four sons. Each of these four rulers was known as a 'tetrarch', from the Greek word for 'four'. While proud and happy to carry the title 'tetrarch or ruler', Herod the Tetrarch failed to live up to the demands of his title. He was at the mercy of his wife, his subjects and his own moral weaknesses. He was ruled by fears - fear of the wrath of his wife, fear of loss of face before his guests and fear of losing the favor of his subjects. Sadly, though, not one decision was made out of the 'fear of the Lord'.

Lest we be too swift to heap judgment on Herod, let us check ourselves. We too carry a 'title' of great honor - we are 'Christians', literally 'little Christs'. We have been assigned a privileged name. We are to reveal Jesus to the world through the way we live. Our speech is to be pure, our behavior loving at all times, our moral judgments always reflecting God's goodness and holiness.

May our manner of life be like that of Peter's and the other apostles' when they were brought before the Jewish rulers for preaching the Gospel.

May we always be able to proclaim as they did to the Sanhedrin, 'We must obey God rather than men!' (Acts 5:29). Let us live up to the Name we bear.

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 17, ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Its official name is “Day of Ashes,” so called because of the practice of rubbing ashes on one’s forehead in the sign of a cross.

Since it is exactly 40 days (excluding Sundays) before Easter Sunday, it will always fall on a Wednesday—there cannot be an “Ash Thursday” or “Ash Monday.” The Bible never mentions Ash Wednesday—for that matter, it never mentions Lent.

Lent is intended to be a time of self-denial, moderation, fasting, and the forsaking of sinful activities and habits. Ash Wednesday commences this period of spiritual discipline. Ash Wednesday and Lent are observed by most Catholics and some Protestant denominations. The Eastern Orthodox Church does not observe Ash Wednesday; instead, they start Lent on “Clean Monday.”

While the Bible does not mention Ash Wednesday, it does record accounts of people in the Old Testament using dust and ashes as symbols of repentance and/or mourning (2 Sam 13:19; Est 4:1; Job 2:8; Dan 9:3). The modern tradition of rubbing a cross on a person’s forehead supposedly identifies that person with Jesus Christ.

Should a Christian observe Ash Wednesday? Since the Bible nowhere explicitly commands or condemns such a practice, Christians are at liberty to prayerfully decide whether or not to observe Ash Wednesday.

If a Christian decides to observe Ash Wednesday and/or Lent, it is important to have a biblical perspective. Jesus warned us against making a show of our fasting: “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen” (Mat 6:16-18). We must not allow spiritual discipline to become spiritual pride.

It is a good thing to repent of sinful activities, but that’s something Christians should do every day, not just during Lent. It’s a good thing to clearly identify oneself as a Christian, but, again, this should be an everyday identification. And it is good to remember that no ritual can make one’s heart right with God.

FEB 18, THURSDAY Mat 14:13-21; Mar 6:33-44; Luk 9:10-17; Joh 6:1-15

Seeing Is Not Always Believing

Mat 14:18a

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:31 (Tomorrow's Reading)

'If I had been there when Jesus fed the five thousand people, I would have no problem believing that He can help me with all my problems. I will never doubt Him.' I overheard these remarks while walking behind two school boys after a Christian Fellowship meeting where they had heard me speak about this miracle.

That got me thinking! I too have wondered - would I not be a man of much greater faith if I had personally witnessed the parting of the Red Sea (Exo 14:21), or seen the axe head float because of Elisha's prayer (2 Ki 6:6) or ... yes, Jesus feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes with twelve baskets of broken pieces of bread left over to take home?

But consider Peter ... he was there and he had seen the multiplication of the food. Yet his faith was not 'doubt-proof' - he started walking on the water only to falter and fall into the arms of Jesus.

No, 'seeing is not always believing' and, believing does not always depend on seeing. As Jesus said to Thomas (who proclaimed his belief in the resurrected Jesus only after he had seen Jesus personally), '... blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' (Joh 20:29). Our faith is a result of the indwelling Spirit within each one of us. He is the One who leads us into all truth, reveals Jesus to us and empowers us to be His witnesses (Joh 14:16-17, Acts 1:8).

Paul prayed for the Ephesians, 'that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better' (Eph 1:17). Lord, we desire to know You better.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 19, FRIDAY Mat 14:22-36; Mar 6:45-56; Joh 6:16-21

Jesus Calms Storms

Joh 6:20b

Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. Joh 6:21

The Sea of Galilee is Israel's largest freshwater lake. It is approximately 53 km in circumference, about 21 km long, and 13 km wide; it has a total area of 166 square km, and a maximum depth of approximately 43 m. At 209 m below sea level, it is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth and the second-lowest lake in the world after the Dead Sea. a saltwater lake. (It is not a sea by any normal definition; it is called a sea by tradition.)

Storms and turbulences are common occurrences in the Sea of Galilee. In today's reading, the disciples were laboring hard against the strong wind and waves. They made little progress although four of them were experienced fishermen.

When they saw Jesus walking on water, they did not immediately recognize Him. Thus they were terrified. Later, when they realized that it was Jesus, they invited Him into the boat. As soon as Jesus got into the boat, the wind died down (Mar 6:51) and immediately the boat reached the shore.

We may face 'strong winds' heading our way in our life's journey. When we try to labor hard, we too discover that we are making very little progress. In spite of our experience and knowledge, we often find ourselves wanting. We are simply incapable of handling these 'strong winds'.

Let us remember to invite Jesus to be involved in our struggles. By His grace we will reach the 'shore' and find peace and rest.

Father, be our anchor in our boat when stormy weather hits our lives. Help us to see how Your power is made perfect in our weaknesses, how Your grace is sufficient for us.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 20, SATURDAY

Joh 6:25-71

To Whom Shall We Go

Joh 6:35

'Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." Joh 6:68-69

Many of the people deserted Jesus, the Son of God because they could not accept His hard teaching about Himself as the Bread of Life. The Twelve stayed and continued to believe in Him.

They could not fully understand His teaching either, but they believed in what He said. Simon Peter's answer to the Lord's question, 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' has significant lessons for us as His disciples.

Firstly, though there are many things we may not understand about God. it does not mean that we stop believing in Him. In our readings, we see Jesus as the Son of God who gives eternal life to those who believe. His words and the miraculous signs point us to Him as the only One whom we can turn to - the Savior of the world.

Like the Twelve, we can never know everything about Jesus. But the little that we have come to know about Him is sufficient to bring us to the place where we can say, 'For the things I understand, I thank You, Lord. For the things I do not understand, I trust You, Lord.'

Secondly, it is important to take note that Peter said. 'We believe and know' (v 69). Faith begets understanding! Many try to reverse it. They want to understand first and then only believe. As a result they become disappointed and disillusioned. The Lord seeks faith first in us before He reveals His truth to us. We will never know that the Lord is good until we 'taste Him and see that the Lord is good' (Psa 34:8).

**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.
We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 21, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

What is your Motive ?

Mat 15:11

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Mar 7:6

Terrorism is hitting us hard these days. Many live in fear of harm simply because of their beliefs. What is even more frightening is the use of violence as a means of justifying one's religious beliefs.

Religious extremism is not a new thing. In today's reading we see another form of religious extremism - judging people because they did not follow traditions. For the Pharisees, Jesus' disciples were unclean simply because they did not follow the practices of Judaism (v.5). The problem with this assumption was that the Pharisees were selective in their practices - they only followed the practices that suited them (vs 9-13).

We too can be found guilty of being selectively judgmental of others. We tend to sometimes pronounce harsh judgments on people simply because they do not do things the way we choose. Sadly, many of us hide behind religion to justify our judgments. Surely killing people to justify one's religion cannot be right!

Jesus tells the Pharisees clearly that it is not one's actions but motives that determine one's righteousness. And this has to do with one's heart (v 20). We can do so many things hoping that by doing so we can be considered righteous but if our motives are wrong, all our good deeds will come to naught. Only God knows our heart. Therefore only God can judge others and we should refrain from doing so.

1 Sam 16:7b: *The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*
Pray that Christians will examine their motives in the things that they do so that they will glorify God and not themselves.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 23, TUESDAY

Mat 15:21–39; Mar 7:24–8:10

Syrophenician, Healing & Feeding of the 4,000

Mar 7:30

In 1953, a fledgling business called Rocket Chemical Company and its staff of three set out to create a line of rust-prevention solvents and degreasers for use in the aerospace industry. It took them 40 attempts to perfect their formula. The original secret formula for WD-40—which stands for Water Displacement, 40th attempt—is still in use today. What a story of persistence!

The gospel of Matthew records another story of bold persistence. A Canaanite woman had a daughter who was possessed by a demon. She had no hope for her daughter—until she heard that Jesus was in the region.

This desperate woman came to Jesus with her need because she believed He could help her. She cried out to Him even though everything and everybody seemed to be against her—race, religious background, gender, the disciples, Satan, and seemingly even Jesus ([Mat 15:22-27](#)). Despite all of these obstacles, she did not give up. With bold persistence, she pushed her way through the dark corridors of difficulty, desperate need, and rejection. The result? Jesus commended her for her faith and healed her daughter (v.28).

We too are invited to approach Jesus with bold persistence. As we keep asking, seeking, and knocking, we will find grace and mercy in our time of need.

By **Marvin Williams**

**Something happens when we pray, Take our place and therein stay,
Wrestle on till break of day; Ever let us pray. —Anon.**

Persistence in prayer pleases God.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 24, WEDNESDAY

Mat 16:1-12; Mar 8:11-26

He is True to His Word

Mar 8:17

“Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Matthew 16:6

The Pharisees and the Sadducees did not agree among themselves. They were often at odds with each other over doctrinal beliefs. The former believed in angels, bodily resurrection after death and a set of teachings called the ‘Oral Law’ while the Sadducees did not. Yet they were united over a common enemy - Jesus.

Jesus often criticized them for their hypocritical religious practices. Ritual over genuine repentance; strict observance of the Law over selfless loving care for those in need; a craving for public acclaim over personal piety; knowledge over kindness ... such was the state of their religiosity.

As Jesus came close to the end of His public ministry, He spoke out more and more against blind observance of institutionalized religion. He called for a personal response to God. What was Jesus specifically referring to when He warned His disciples against the ‘yeast’ of the Pharisees and the Sadducees? In this context, it is likely referring to the persistent choice they made to reject Jesus as the Messiah despite His teaching and Messianic acts of healing.

Lest we be quick to judge them, do we not, even today, occasionally ask for a ‘sign’ from God so that we may know that He is in control over all the affairs of our lives? We have even less excuse than the Pharisees and the Sadducees because today, the sign of Jonah has been given (12:40). Our faith should rest squarely on the fact of the resurrected Lord. We must choose to believe truth over falsehood.

Doubt - this has been the ploy of the devil from the time he tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. The next time he tries to incite you to question God’s love for you and His ability to help you, choose to reject doubt. Choose faith - believe. Jesus has risen from the grave and He lives!

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 25, THURSDAY Mat 16:13-28; Mar 8:27-9:1; Luk 9:18-27

Which Jesus are You Following?

Joh 5:6b

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luk 9:23

Everybody loves a winner, Everybody loves a winner, But when you lose, you lose alone. - Linda Ronstadt -

Which Jesus are you following? The One who exorcised demons, healed the sick, calmed the waves, raised the dead and fed 5000? Peter saw all that Jesus did and he went out and did the same. When Jesus Christ asked him who Peter thought He was, the answer came confidently: 'The Christ of God' (v.20). I am sure you agree with Peter's answer.

But you will not get full marks for that answer, not yet anyway. Because Jesus Christ told Peter: 'Don't tell anyone. Why? Because everybody loves a winner. Everybody wants to believe in Jesus Christ the winner, the healer, the ghost buster. the super bread man, the conqueror of the winds. And Jesus did not want that. He wasn't going to be the average man's idea of a winner. He was going to suffer and be rejected. He was going to die.

Only after He died and was risen was when Peter was to tell people that Jesus is the Christ. Because the Jesus that we are to follow is the One who was also unpopular. Christ suffered, died undeservedly, and finally rose from the dead (v.22). if this is the Jesus that we are to follow then we are not to be surprised at these words: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (v.23). Jesus gave up His rights. we are to give up ours. Jesus humbled Himself. We are to humble ourselves. Jesus suffered unjustly. We must be prepared to suffer unjustly. And we must do it everyday (v.23). We may have to do it alone. But always remember, Jesus is with you. Which Jesus are you following?

Give me grace that I might die to selfishnes daily and accept whatever suffering You send my way. Help me do it even if I have to do it alone.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 26, FRIDAY

Mat 17:1-13; Mar 9:2-13; Luk 9:28-36

The Father's Voice

Mat 17:5b

A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." Luk 9:35

Jesus is set to go to Jerusalem. It is a road of suffering and rejection and finally death and on the third day, resurrection (v.22). This was the lot of the Master we follow; we can expect no less.

Everybody wants to follow a triumphalist leader. But the true followers of Jesus are the ones who follow Him even unto suffering and death (vs 23-24). Is this really the way that has been set for Him by God, His Father? Or shouldn't we just be proclaiming the triumphant Jesus Christ who heals, drives out demons, calms storms, raises the dead and feeds 5000 with five loaves and two fish (v.21)?

The disciples need some confirmation of this call by Jesus Christ to a difficult discipleship. And they get it eight days later (v.28). Jesus takes three of them into the mountains. There they see the Christ transformed, bathed in glory. They see Moses and Elijah bathed in glory too. But are they not dead? No. God is the God of the living (Mat 22:32). (They will remember this when Christ rises from the dead.) Then a voice from the clouds spoke: *'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him'* (v.35).

There is no greater confirmation of a hard and narrow path. The confirmation of the Father is all that is needed. The path of suffering and self denial is not the path of a deluded man, but the path set for Him by God our Father.

This is the Christ we follow today. There will be suffering and even death. But whoever loses his life for Jesus will save it (v.24). Rest assured and believe the words of the Voice from the clouds.

**Give grace and mercy, O Lord, that we who follow You may follow You to the end.
Even if the end should be death.**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 27, SATURDAY

Mat 17:14-27; Mar 9:14-32; Luk 9:37-45

Bring your Son Here

Mar 9:23-24

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. Luk 9:43

Mountain top experiences are very special and rare. Real day to day life is lived in the lowlands. The reality of the Christian life today is that we live in an age when Christ is no longer here bodily. It is His Spirit Who is with us. We live by faith.

The twelve disciples had had success in their mission (v.6). But they had no success with this demon-possessed boy (v.40). When the father saw Jesus he saw hope. But the cry for help earns a rebuke from Jesus.

In this Gospel we are not sure whom Jesus rebuked, but in the parallel narration in Matthew it is directed at the disciples (Mat 17:14-21). Their failure was due to a lack of faith. This rebuke doubtless is made with Jerusalem in mind (v.22).

After the successful healing of the boy, Jesus speaks to the disciples. Again, Jesus' words show that Jerusalem is in mind (v.44).

The disciples did not understand (v.45). We, however, understand for we are people who already know the ending of the story. If we know Christ we depend on God. It is faith in God. It is exercising the power and authority given us by Christ (v.1).

It is the man of faith who moves mountains. When he does, it will be a mountain top experience in the lowlands.

**Reminder: I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, Move from here to there' and it will move.
Nothing will be impossible for you.'**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

FEB 28, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

MAR 1, MONDAY

Mat 18:1-9; Mar 9:33-50; Luk 9:46-50

The Least is the Greatest

Mat 18:3-4

For he who is least among you all- he is the greatest.' Luk 9:48b

Jesus' second announcement of what lay ahead in Jerusalem is not understood (v.44). They have heard of the sort of discipleship demanded by Jesus Christ earlier after the first announcement of His passion (v.23). But the outworkings of that sort of discipleship has not been understood. Their lack of understanding is evident as they argue about greatness (v.46).

The disciples still think of greatness and their band in worldly terms. For them greatness depends on achievement and position and they see their band as privileged and exclusive. But Jesus overturns their idea. Children are nobodies in Jewish societal hierarchy. By associating God with a child, He very pointedly says the least among them is the greatest.

John, realizing that he may have made a mistake by stopping some outsider from ministry, asks Jesus if he had done the right thing. The answer is telling. Ministry is not exclusive to the band. It is the prerogative of God to use whomever He wants.

How often have we thought that greatness belongs to leaders like Peter or beloved ones like John or to the privileged three who were at the mountain top experience? In the kingdom of God however, greatness is not measured by achievement but is a gift given by God. So we do not have to fret when other people are put on a pedestal. We just need to be a servant like Jesus (Phi 2:3-11) and He will exalt us.

The servant attitude takes care of 'the exclusive club mentality.' Serving God does not make us exclusive and special: He called us and He can call others. It is not our business to exclude other servants of God.

O God, teach us to be humble so that we might be truly servants with a servant's heart.

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 2, TUESDAY

Mat 18:10-14; Luk 15:1-32

God's Persistence To Save

Luk 15:7

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. Luk 15:7

We may think that we are good followers of Christ but sometimes, things happen that force us to rethink some of our assumptions. The Pharisees and teachers of the law have a major issue with Jesus (v.1-2). Jesus does not just have 'sinners' gathering round Him but He has table-fellowship with them. They are considered outcasts and to the Pharisees, to have meals with them is beyond the realms of propriety.

Jesus uses two parables (verses 4-6 and verses 8-9) to illustrate His points. In both parables, something is lost and the owners spend a lot of time and effort to look for what is lost. When found, they have great joy and celebrate with their friends and neighbors. Jesus goes on to equate that to the joy in heaven when someone repents (v.7,10).

This passage says much about the heart of God; He cares enough for sinners to go looking for them, even when they have stayed away consciously. Jesus' implicit rebuke of the approach of the Pharisees is a challenge to us that we too need to examine our attitudes. It is easy to dismiss as insignificant the variety of people whom our culture has cast aside or views with contempt. This could be people who suffer from debilitating diseases like AIDS or those who have made wrong choices in life. We are called to action, because we appreciate just how much heaven wants us to search for those who are lost.

**Are we too busy for others?
What can we do with our lives so that we have opportunities
to have fellowship with the 'outcasts' or 'sinners' in our society?**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 3, WEDNESDAY Mat 18:15-35

Seventy-Seven Times and more!

Mat 18:35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." Mat 18:21-22

What we find most difficult to do - to forgive others - is what God requires the most from us. Peter wanted to know how many times we need to forgive others and Jesus answered 'seventy-seven times'. This really means an infinite number of times. But why is it so important to forgive? Because our grievances are trivial when compared to what God has forgiven us in Christ Jesus.

The parable of the unmerciful servant drives home the point that God's mercy towards us must be matched by our forgiveness of others (v.27, 35). However, this does not mean we do not address those who sin against us. Jesus tells us that we ought to talk things over with the person who has grieved us (v.15). The purpose is to work towards repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. If the person fails to listen we are to pray for him or her, preferably with others. When our hearts are united for the purpose of reconciliation, God will surely hear us and answer our prayers (v.19-20).

We are not to think that we are doing God or anybody else a favor when we forgive. Rather, we do ourselves a whole lot of good when we do so for unforgiveness not only fills us with bitterness, it can cause us a whole host of health problems. These include sleepless nights, headaches, depression, ulcers and exhaustion. It is much easier to forgive those who have grieved us than live with the consequences of unforgiveness!

**Lord, help me to be sincere when I pray daily,
'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us'**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 4, THURSDAY

Mat 8:18-22; Luk 9:51-62; Joh 7:1-13

Disciples Need Focus

Luk 9:62

"No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luk 9:62

Unless we keep our focus firmly on Christ we will get easily distracted no matter what environment we live in. In today's passage we meet some distracted and wannabe disciples of Jesus. They wanted to follow Jesus but lacked focus. Jesus' response to them reveals the kind of focus they each needed but lacked.

First, some Samaritans showed disrespect for Jesus and the disciples wanted to vent their feelings (v 54). But discipleship is about compassion and humility, not about a show of power as retribution for 'loss of face.' Sometimes, the Asian tendency to value 'face' may cause us to lose focus.

Then there is the wannabe disciple who thinks following Christ is easy (v 57). But he is not accepted because his focus is on his earthly security and not wholly on Jesus. Sometimes, genuine concerns for earthly security can become distractions.

Next we find two wannabe disciples who are willing to follow but add in later clauses (vs 59,61). But this too is not acceptable to Jesus. Too often, our 'reasonable' arguments, even that of filial piety, are nothing but nice sounding cover-ups to distract others from our lack of commitment.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb 12:2).

What kind of disciples are we?

**Are we wishy-washy and easily distracted with all kinds of 'reasonable and valid' excuses
or are we focused followers who have our hands to the plough,
and with God's help, will never look back?**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 5, FRIDAY

Joh 7:14-53

What Do We Thirst For?

Joh 7:37b-38

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." Joh 7:37

For the Jews, 'thirst' and 'water' are used symbolically to refer to their relationship with God. The psalmist's 'soul thirsts for God' (Psa 42:2). God is referred to as 'the spring of living water' (Jer 2:13) and so is the Holy Spirit (v.39). At the highest point of the Feast. Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice. 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink'. He was clearly claiming to be God. Those who were thirsting for God believed Him (v.40-41). They recognized that with all the miracles He had performed, He had to be the Christ, their Messiah (v.31). Nicodemus, a Pharisee, was one of them (v.50). Even the temple guards who were sent to arrest Him and who returned empty-handed conveyed a positive report about Him to those who sent them (v.46).

Others questioned Jesus' claim to Messiahship by debating His origins (v.27, 41b-42). Would it have made a difference if they had known the facts about Jesus' birth and that He was from Bethlehem and not Galilee? There is a big difference between knowing certain facts about a person and believing in him for who he is.

Unlike the psalmist who thirsted for God and longed to meet Him (Psa 42:1-2), people who reject Jesus have no such thirst for God. They replace thirst for God with something other than God. Thus the chief priests and Pharisees were out to kill Jesus (v.47-49). They neither knew God nor their own Scriptures for they were mistaken when they said that 'a prophet does not come out of Galilee' (v.52). Jonah son of Amittai was a prophet from Gath Hopher which was about 3 miles northeast of Nazareth in Galilee. See 2 Ki 14:25.

What we thirst for determines how we live our lives.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 6, SATURDAY Joh 8:1-30

Sin has No Favorites

Joh 8:7b

When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Joh 8:7

When we read in the newspapers that a lorry-driver has been arrested for wife beating we think nothing of it. But if the person responsible happens to be a respected professor from a reputable university, we are shocked. We should not be. Sin shows no favoritism. Today, we see Jesus teaching this lesson to the self-righteous Pharisees and teachers of the law.

They acted as if they were horrified by the sin of adultery. If that were so, they ought also to have brought the man to Jesus for the law of Moses applied equally to the woman and man (Deu 22:22). It was obvious that they were trying to test Jesus (v.6). In so doing they were behaving like their sinful forefathers who put God to the test in the wilderness (Exo 17:2, Num 20:13). They knew Roman law did not allow stoning. Would Jesus as a Jew and a teacher from God follow the demand of the law of Moses and put her to death? What was Jesus to do? His response was to bend down and write on the ground with His finger (v.6b).

There is much speculation about what Jesus wrote but most Bible scholars believe He could have been acting out Jer 17:13b: *'Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water'*. To have your name written in the dust is the opposite of having your name written in the Book of Life. If the teachers of the law and the Pharisees didn't get the message that they were no less sinful than the woman they condemned, they did when Jesus said. *'If any one of you is without sin. let him be the first to throw a stone at her'*.

There was someone qualified to stone the woman. Yes. Jesus the sinless One. He showed her mercy instead but He also did not condone the sin. There was to be no repetition of past sins. She could look forward to a new life in Christ (v.11).

We are all tainted by sin. We need to keep this in mind when we seek to help people who have been condemned by society. Separating the sin from the sinner will help us to better understand them.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 7, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

MAR 8, MONDAY Joh 8:31-59

The Jews Learn Some Home Truths

Joh 8:31

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin". Joh 8:34

The Jews considered themselves unique as they were the only nation that had a covenant relationship with God. Israel was God’s son (Exo 4:22) and God was their Father (v.41b). However, there were conditions to the covenant - Israel had to obey God ‘fully’ (Exo 19:5). The Jews who said they had never been slaves to anyone (v.33) had forgotten that every time they broke faith with God, He had sent foreign forces to rule over them. Even as they spoke they were being occupied by the forces of Rome.

When Jesus addressed those who believed in Him, He knew that their belief was not based on who He was. They believed in a Messiah who would free them from the enemies of their nation. He had come to set them free from their sins (v.32). It is not the freedom to do as we please but the freedom to please God. Since God is the source of all good, this is the freedom that is good for us. Only the Son of God who is free from all sin can offer us this freedom (v.34-36).

The Jews believed that since Abraham was their father, they were already under God’s favour and were not under any bondage. Jesus told them some home truths about their relationship to Abraham. Yes, they shared the same DNA but their deeds showed that their father was not Abraham but the devil himself (v.44). These are strong words. When we do not choose God, we choose the devil (v.47).

As we read Jesus’ description of the devil’s nature (v.44), we see that it is the opposite of His own. Jesus gives life, the devil is a murderer; Jesus is the truth and speaks the truth, the devil is a liar and speaks only lies; Jesus always speaks ‘just what the Father has taught’ Him (v.28) while the devil ‘speaks his native language’ - exactly what he wants to say. The devil is not a good choice. Only those who do not know God will choose him (v. 45-47).

Just because parents are active in church or are well known Christian leaders does not mean that their children will choose God. However, children will gladly choose Him if their parents reflect the truth and beauty of the Lord to them.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 9, TUESDAY Joh 9:1-41

Knowing and Accepting Truth

Joh 9:25b

"One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" Joh 9:25b

Imagine that you were the man born blind. One day you were sitting in your dark world and begging and the next you had crystal-clear vision and were debating with your religious leaders. The Person behind this amazing transformation? Jesus!

But the Pharisees did not want to attribute such powers to Jesus for that would mean acknowledging Jesus for who He is. Though not physically blind, they refused to see the reality of the truth that was before them. Again and again, they questioned the once-blind man (v.13-15, 17, 26) hoping that he would change his story. They even called in his parents for questioning hoping that they would say that their son had never been blind (v.18-19).

There are people, like the Pharisees, who do not want to know the truth or accept it as that would require them to make changes in their life that might affect their pride, position and power. They are insecure. They do not realize that only in Christ can they find true security and acceptance.

The parents of the blind man knew the truth but did not want to accept it. For years they had been burdened with a son born blind and the guilt of causing it. However, when Jesus restored their son's sight and wiped away their guilt they chose not to acknowledge Him and celebrate. They forfeited the blessings of a life lived in truth because they feared being 'put out of the synagogue' (v.20-23).

Their son, however, had no such fears (v.34b). He may have had some respect for the Pharisees to start with but it began to disappear as he debated with them. They had tried to make Jesus out to be a sinner because He healed on the Sabbath (v.16, 24) and they, themselves to be righteous because they were disciples of Moses and kept the Sabbath (v.28-29). But the healed man focused on the facts - his sight had been restored, God hears only those who do His will and not sinners so the One who had healed him does God's will and never before has anyone 'opened' the eyes of a man born blind (v.30-32). The Pharisees did not want to accept the truth and became defensive, accusing him of being 'steeped in sin at birth' and 'threw him out' (v.34).

It is better to be thrown out for the sake of truth than be a part of a group that does not accept the truth.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 10, WEDNESDAY

Joh 10:1-21

The Good Shepherd

Joh 10:10

An intriguing element of English football is the team anthem sung by the fans at the start of each match. These songs range from the fun (“Glad All Over”) to the whimsical (“I’m Forever Blowing Bubbles”) to the surprising. “Psalm 23,” for instance, is the anthem of the club from West Bromwich Albion. The words of that psalm appear on the façade inside the team’s stadium, declaring to everyone who comes to watch the “West Brom Baggies” the care of the good, great, and chief Shepherd.

In Psalm 23, David made his timeless statement, “The Lord is my shepherd” (v.1). Later, the gospel writer Matthew would tell us, “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). And in John 10, Jesus declared His love and concern for the human “sheep” of His generation. “I am the good shepherd,” He said. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (v.11). Jesus’s compassion drove His interactions with the crowds, His responses to their needs, and, ultimately, His sacrifice on their (and our) behalf.

“The Lord is my shepherd” is far more than an ancient lyric or a clever slogan. It’s the confident statement of what it means to be known and loved by our great God—and what it means to be rescued by His Son.

By **Bill Crowder**

**In what ways have you seen God’s care for you?
Who can you tell about Him today?**

*What a gift our Shepherd is to us, Father!
Help us to respond to His voice—and draw nearer to You.*

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 11, THURSDAY

Joh 10:22-42

Unbelief of the Jews

Joh 10:27-28

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse."

The people of Jesus' day were confronted with this choice. Although the Teacher's words and actions set Him apart, *"the people were ... divided in their opinions about him. Some said, 'He's demon possessed and out of his mind. Why listen to a man like that?' Others said, 'This doesn't sound like a man possessed by a demon! Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"* (Joh 10:19-21).

At the height of the controversy, *"the people surrounded him and asked, 'how long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly'"* (Joh 10:24). *"I have already told you, and you don't believe me," Jesus replied. "The proof is the work I do in my Father's name. ... The Father and I are one"* (Joh 10:25,30). Ironically, even when Jesus spoke plainly to them, the crowd struggled with His response. No sooner had He made this declaration than *"once again the people picked up stones to kill him"* (Joh 10:31).

The struggle to accept Christ's claims continues today. If you harbor a lingering doubt about who He is, prayerfully consider what He revealed about Himself (Joh 10:24-30). The One who died and rose again that we might have eternal life—revealing His power over sin and death—is the Messiah, our Shepherd, and the Giver of life (Joh 10:24-28). Jesus is the Son of God! (Joh 10:30).

Taken from "Our Daily Journey"

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 12, FRIDAY

Luk 10:1-24

Short-term Mission Trips

Luk 10:20

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. Luk 10:1

Most churches have sent out teams on 'short-term mission trips.' The benefits of these trips are still being debated. So if you have not gone before, should you go?

In today's passage we see Jesus sending 72 'ordinary' disciples on their first ever short-term mission trip. What can we learn from this 'mission trip'? Among the facts gleaned from this passage, we can see that its context was the great missionary need but a lack of workers (v.2). So Jesus sends out a group of committed 'non-full time' disciples to partner with Him by preparing the way for the Gospel message to be preached (v.1).

The 'mission trip' was a success (v.17-20) because the mission team members were well prepared and obedient to Jesus' instructions (vs 3-11). This was no mission tour. They were aware of the serious responsibility and difficulties associated with such a mission. It was a wonderful opportunity for them to serve and experience practical Christian ministry. They learned things like 'living by faith' (v.4-7), partnering with locals and learning to humbly receive hospitality (v.5-7), understanding the reality of 'rejection' (v.10-11) and 'spiritual warfare' (v.9, 17, 19). In addition, it opened their eyes to real needs and the realization of life's priorities and the privilege of being a Christian (v.16, 20).

As someone who has personally led various 'short-term mission teams' for a number of years, I have found, along with others, that a combination of right selection, right attitude and realistic preparation can result in great blessings to all concerned.

Before we go on a mission trip, let us ask: Is this to be a mission trip or a mission tour?

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 13, SATURDAY Luk 10:25-42

Just Obey and Do It

Luk 10:41-42

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." Luk 10:28

We don't do what we know we ought to do. This, surely, is one of our biggest failures. We know we need to love others, but we pick and choose whom we love and exclude others we may not like or feel comfortable with. We know we need to spend quality time with Jesus but we substitute it for something else. Even the apostle Paul experienced this (read Rom 7:21-23).

In today's passage, we find that the expert in the law had a similar problem. He knew what was right but would not do it. In this well-known parable, Jesus tells us to go beyond head knowledge. Just obey and do it!

The Samaritan doesn't stop to consider that the man is a Jew and that Jews despise Samaritans. He sees the one thing he needs to do and compassion spurs him to action (v.33). He renders practical help (v.33) that must have been an inconvenience (v.34) and he goes even further - beyond the call of duty (v.35). He does not weigh the pros and cons and worry about what people might say.

Mary made a similar decision. What was needed was to sit at the feet of Jesus but Martha became distracted with service. Mary dropped everything for the one thing that was needed - She 'just did it.' She obeyed irrespective of what others might say.

**What is the one thing that God is telling you to do today?
It's not enough that you can answer correctly.
Will you trust and obey God and just do it?**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 14, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

MAR 15, MONDAY

Mat 12:22–37; Mar 3:20–30; Luk 11:14–28

The Purpose of Miraculous Healings

Mat 12:33

He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." Luk 11:28

It is easy to miss the point when miracles happen. We miss the point when we focus on questions such as the method, the circumstances and other unimportant details. To our shame we sometimes may also wonder how we could 'replicate' the miracle.

In today's passage, as in many other parts of the Bible, the questions related to miraculous healings have nothing to do with the kinds of questions we normally ask. Luke does not give us the details (v.14a) but the responses (v.14b–16) and the implications and consequences of the responses (vs 17-28). The miraculous healing was a sign that authenticated Jesus' message and ministry (see Luk 4:16–21)

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, understood this and he said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him' (Joh 3:2). But in today's passage, the response was one of jealousy, unbelief and plain slander (v.15–16).

Miraculous healings remind us that Jesus has won the victory over Satan (v.20–22) even if not all will be healed (see 1 Tim 5:23, 2 Tim 4:20, 2 Cor 12:7–9). It also reminds us that miraculous healing is a reminder that God is still in control. His kingdom has come on earth (v.20–21) and we have a responsibility to live for God (v.23–26).

God brings miraculous healing not to pander to our wants (v.16) or even to receive our praise (v.27 - though He surely deserves all the praise and glory) but that we may gratefully respond with allegiance and obedience to Jesus. Truly, this is the greater blessing (v.28).

**Miracles are not so much about us as they are about God.
They remind us to be responsible citizens of His kingdom.**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 16, TUESDAY Mat 12:38-45; Luk 11:29-36

Generosity and Responsibility

Luk 11:29

Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. Luk 11:34

The stewardship of money (giving, tithing etc) is not often taught in churches. The exception, of course, is when there is a church building programme. And yet in many church leadership meetings, matters related to money often take up the most time.

In today's passage, Jesus brings up the subject of money, specifically the need for us to be generous with our money. To have 'a good eye' is a Jewish idiom (common in Jesus' time) which simply means 'you are generous' and to have a "bad eye" simply means 'you are stingy.' Read the parallel passage in Mat 6:19-24.

Our passage begins with Jesus condemning His generation for their unbelief despite being given so much. Jesus Himself stood among them with all the overwhelming evidence of God's love and yet they were apathetic (v.30-32). So much knowledge and yet so little responsible action! And this is plainly 'wicked' (v.29).

Jesus then addresses those who believe and are not 'wicked'. He reminds us that we who are to be lights of the world need to let our light shine in a prominent place (v.33). How are we to do this? Jesus tells us that the way to let our light shine is to loosen our purse strings! If we truly want our light to shine then we have to be generous with what we have been given (v.35). How much more attractive would the Gospel be if we would increase in our generosity? Are we growing in generosity by responsibly sharing what we have been entrusted with?

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” (Luk 12:48b)

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 17, WEDNESDAY

Mat 23:1–36; Luk 11:37–54

Love or Legalism?

Mat 23:12

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practised the latter without leaving the former undone." Luk 11:42

For the devout Jew, 'observance of the Sabbath,' means ceasing from work. The Torah (Law), however, lists only a few prohibitions explicitly. 'Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out (Exo 16:29) and "Whoever does any work on it must be put to death. Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day' (Exo 35:2–3). Yet from these two verses, the Rabbis were able to come up with seven basic categories of prohibited work further sub-divided into a total of 39 prohibitions. They then laid down further injunctions covering every conceivable area that would prevent any accidental breaking of the 39 prohibitions. These in time became 'laws'. The intention was sincere and noble but the results were disastrous.

It is no wonder that in today's passage, Jesus severely rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees for their interpretation and regulations that made God's law a heavy burden (v.46). Jesus is not against piety and those who adhere to strict religious observances and practices (v.42) for God has much room for diversity of religious observances (see Romans 14:1-6). The only criteria to note is that whatever our preferences, we do not lose sight of the main point of religious practices: justice and the love of God (v.42).

Jesus focused on how to love God and others (see also Mat 22:36–40). The Pharisees and Scribes focused on how 'not to sin'. Jesus' approach was positive and God-centred. The Pharisees and Scribes were negative and self-centered and this inevitably resulted in legalism and pride (v.39, 42, 43, 46). Worse, it hindered others from knowing the love of God because God's laws were wrongly made out to be oppressive (v.46, 52).

**What is our approach to our spiritual life?
Do we focus on loving God and others or are we taken up with not sinning?**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 18, THURSDAY Luk 12:1-21

How Much Is Enough ?

Luk 12:15

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luk 12:15

How much is enough? A very rich man was once asked this question, and his answer was very insightful. 'Just a little bit more!' In today's consumer culture, we can never seem to get enough of anything.

In today's passage two stories address the question of how much we overvalue our material possessions. In the first story, a man tries to get Jesus' help to get a share of a family inheritance. Interestingly, Jesus does not even bother to find out whether he had a valid case or not (v.13-14). Rather, He wars against our natural and sinful greed, and our human obsession with material possessions (v.15). To stress His point, He told the crowd a parable (v.16-21).

Jesus makes two simple points (v.15). The first is that it is sinful to want more than our fair share (this is the meaning of the word 'greed' or in some versions "covetousness"). And second, the way to judging whether we are greedy is to assess whether we have an excessive amount of possessions (which is the meaning of abundance of possessions').

The next parable Jesus told becomes clearer in meaning. Greed and self-centered pursuit for the bigger and better displeases God. Storing up excess possessions instead of using material things for God's glory displeases God. When we do so, we forget that our lives and all that we have belong to God (v.16-21).

Do we have material possessions in excess? Do we see our possessions as belonging to God and gladly share them so that others may be blessed to the glory of God?

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 19, FRIDAY Luk 12:35-59

It's Also For You

Luk 12:40

Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" Luk 12:41

It is not uncommon for us to leave church on Sunday thinking about how someone else needs to apply the message that was preached. Because the message was something basic that we already 'know', we mistakenly forget that the word of God was actually also for us.

Peter thought the same way and asked, 'Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?' (v.41). I suppose he asked because Jesus was teaching on something they already knew, namely the importance of faithfulness and responsibility (v.35-40).

What is interesting is that Jesus does not answer Peter's question. Instead, He goes on to elaborate on faithfulness and responsibility by relating it to proper stewardship of material possessions (v.42-44). Jesus warns that He will be coming back one day to demand an account (v.45-48). By doing so, Jesus was gently reminding Peter that the message, though familiar, was for him as well. Peter had much to learn and to apply in his life.

Today's reading reminds us that it is easy to lose focus when we forget that we are but stewards of the good things we possess. When we think we are masters, we will tend to treat others as our 'servants' when in reality we are also servants (v.45).

How do we treat waiters or our hired help? Do we give them their dues (v.42)? Just because we have the money and the power and we have paid for a service does not give us the license to act selfishly. Someday we will be called to give an account of our actions (v.45-48).

**Let us not forget that we are God's servants and that when God gives us more,
it is for us to be able to bless others more (v.48).**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 20, SATURDAY Luk 13:1-17

Watch Out!

Luk 13:8

"I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Luk 13:3, 5

When something bad befalls a 'bad person', we usually react by saying that the person is getting his just punishment. Or in more 'spirituals terms' we declare that he is reaping what he has sown. Case closed. However, when something bad happens to a 'good person', it's suddenly not so simple. Rather, it becomes confusing. To solve the confusion we might think to ourselves that the reason must be that this 'good person' has a dark secret. But if it involves someone dear to us whom we know is good, this reasoning just falls apart. Bad things happen to bad people but surely not to good people?

In today's Bible passage, Jesus challenges the validity of this belief. Yes, evil people will be punished and the good rewarded. However, the concept of who is good and who is evil needs to be clearly understood from God's perspective.

First, Jesus makes it clear that all of us are sinners (vs 1-5). We all need to repent (vs 3, 5). Second, when bad things happen to people we should not speculate as to why it has happened. Rather, we should take it as a reminder to repent of our own sins (vs 1-5). The parable in verses 6-9 tells us how.

We need to show the evidence (fruit) of our repentance (v 6). This is what God (the owner of the vineyard) seeks. Not having fruit means there has not been true repentance. If this is the case, judgment will come (v 7). Punishment has been withheld because of the intercession of Christ (the gardener). We have been given more time (v 8) to get matters right. But time is limited so we need to watch out before it is too late (v 9).

But by the grace of God, we have forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. Do we really know Jesus as Lord and Savior? If we do, let us show it in the fruits of repentance.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 21, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

MAR 22, MONDAY

Mat 23:37-39; Luk 13:31-14:14

The People were Not Willing

Luk 14:11

"O 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, but you were not willing!" Luk 13:34

Most of us are familiar with some form of rejection. Even if the pain may be gone, we remember quite vividly the episodes when we experienced the pain of rejection. How we respond to the rejection tells us a lot about who we are and where we are at in our life's journey.

In today's passage, we get an insight into how Jesus dealt with rejection. The Pharisees had rejected Him. They came to intimidate Him by telling Him that Herod had not only rejected Him but also wanted to kill him (v.31). Added to that rejection, the Jewish nation (represented by Jerusalem) had also rejected Him (v.34).

Jesus did not waste time worrying about being rejected by someone like Herod who was cunning, self-seeking and evil. Herod's rejection and threat were a reminder that Jesus was on the right track. He kept His focus on the task God had appointed for Him (v.32-33).

But His rejection by the Jewish nation brought a different response. Their rejection of Him was mostly due to stubborn blindness. Rather than respond with anger, Jesus responded with great sadness and compassion. Luk 19:28 tells us Jesus wept for Jerusalem. He had loved the people and had come to bring them salvation and deliverance.

"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man." (Luk 6:22)

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 23, TUESDAY Mat 22:1-14; Luk 14:15-35

Finishing The Journey

Luk 14:27

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Luk 14:27

Before we start something, it is prudent for us to know what we are deciding and how much it is going to cost us. Here, Jesus immediately puts a radical challenge (v.26-27) to the crowds following Him. It was meant for them to stop and think. It should be noted that 'to love this and to hate that' is a typical biblical way of expressing preference. Even so, there is the necessity to follow Jesus in His cross-bearing - it is a discipleship that is prepared even to die with Him.

Jesus uses two different circumstances (versus 28-30 and versus 31-32) to illustrate His basic point: discipleship requires a conscious advance commitment, made with a realistic estimate of the ultimate personal cost. Jesus goes on to make a radical demand (v.33). It is a demand to abandon the hold on things or the right to ownership.

The disciple of Jesus may be given the use of things in trust, as stewardship, but they are no longer his own. The willingness to part with our goods (which are not ultimately ours anyway) is necessary today.

The consistent quality of life that Jesus expects of His disciples is that they remain "salty" (v.34-35). To be salty is to have an effect on those around us. It may mean making decisions that are difficult, not condoning sin in our families or workplace. To follow Jesus and share His cross may mean that neighbors and friends do not always understand why we do what we do.

Do I yield to the Lord in every area of my life - my possessions, my family, even my own life? Do I really trust Him to care for me? These are difficult questions.

We may say that we have given over all, when we have only given over what we are comfortable in handing over to Him.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 24, WEDNESDAY

Luk 16:1-31

Seeking True and Eternal Riches

Luk 16:13

"So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" Luk 16:11

The parable begins with a rich man who has a manager in charge of administering his affairs. The rich man orders the manager to account for his stewardship (v.1-2). Facing a future on the streets, the fired manager contemplates his options (v.3-4). The manager develops a plan that will make his master's debtors thankful to him (v.5-7). Jesus commends the manager for his shrewdness.

Jesus' applications extend in various directions. He notes that the people of the world are shrewder than the people of the light. They are more able to make friends and think through their actions for both short and long terms (v.8-9). We should use resources generously 'so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings' (v.9).

To gain friends is to use money in such a way that others appreciate you for your exercise of stewardship, your kindness and generosity. Handling wealth is a preparatory lesson for other responsibilities before God (v.10-13).

This parable is not a commendation of dishonest stewardship, but of shrewd forethought and preparation for a future crisis. The point is simple: we should invest our money in God's kingdom, not in this temporary and insecure world. The use of money is a measure of faithfulness and of a person's fitness for the greater wealth of the kingdom. Wealth is to be used for God, not to become a substitute for God.

To serve God is to give the resources He has given us to meet the needs of those around us. Some day, God will evaluate our use of resources, whether we have handled them in a way that anticipates His desires and values. This may be a good time to reflect on our stewardship of the resources given to us.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 25, THURSDAY

Luk 17:1-19

Discipleship is Servanthood

Luk 17:15

So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty." Luk 17:10

Discipleship is doing what the Lord wants us to do. The first aspect of discipleship here is expressed in a warning not to be the cause of sin (v.1-3). Those who lead others into error are at risk before God. Jesus' stress here is that individuals must guard themselves in such matters. But the possibility of error needs to be balanced with forgiveness. So Jesus calls for not only rebuke of sin but also a quickness to forgive (v.3-4). The assumption behind such mutual accountability is the community's commitment to pursue righteousness (Gal 6:1).

Deep and honest relationships presuppose a grounding in relationship with God. Sensitive to this link, the disciples ask for an increase in their faith (v.5). Jesus is concerned not about faith's volume but about its presence (v.6). Jesus is arguing that a little faith can do surprising things. Do not fret about how great your faith is; only apply what you have and watch it work. The disciple's main responsibility is to trust God.

Out of such faith should come service. Jesus pictures a servant coming in after a long day of work, only to be asked to prepare the master's dinner (v.7-9). The servant will not get a meal until the master is served. He will not be thanked and he does it because it is his duty. There is no selective obedience here, no bargaining to do something for the master only if he does a favor in return. Faith understands forgiveness and leads to duty. Christianity is not a privatized experience of faith.

The world's idea of success is to lord it over others. Jesus' way is the namely, servanthood - which is actually the way to true reverse greatness. Let us give thanks for the privilege to be His disciples and for the resources given to serve Him and others.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 26, FRIDAY

Luk 17:20-37

Subjects of God's Kingdom

Luk 17:33

"Nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luk 17:21

As we wait for Christ to come again, we may be tempted to focus on the time rather than to be good disciples and good subjects of God's kingdom. To the Pharisees' question of 'when,' Jesus' answer is that the kingdom does not come with signs to be observed (v.20). In spite of claims of 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' when the Son of Man comes, it will be visible and obvious (v.23-24), like lightning flashing across the sky. One crucial event must precede all of this (v.25). The central event is the suffering of the Son of Man. Suffering precedes glory for Jesus.

Jesus compares the nature of the messianic judgment to the flood in the days of Noah (Gen 7) and to the days of Lot at Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). These were two great periods of judgment. Just as they did then, people will engage in the affairs of life (v.26-29) with little attention to God.

If the world is not careful, it will not be prepared for judgment when it comes. We tend to be too tied to the things of the earth (v.31) to hear the voice of God. Such misplaced allegiance is why Jesus says that the person who seeks to save his life will lose it, while those willing to lose their lives will save them (v.33). To the disciples' question of 'where' (v.37), Jesus deflects the question by pointing to the judgment. There will be total devastation for those who reject God.

**Jesus is saying that people are the subjects, not the timekeepers, of God's kingdom.
Let us reflect on how we can live as loyal and obedient subjects of His kingdom.**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 27, SATURDAY Mat 19:1-12; Mar 10:1-12

God Hates Divorce

Mar 10:9

But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. Mar 10:6-9

Many marriages today end in divorce. If we have not experienced it personally, we personally know someone who has. It's happening everywhere from the west to the east. It seems that when things get rough, people want out. And they are getting out in increasing numbers, no doubt fueled by what is portrayed in the dramas on TV.

There were two schools of thought in Jesus' day concerning divorce, propagated by two popular rabbis, Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai. Rabbi Shammai, who held the stricter view, taught that divorce was only permissible on the grounds of some sexual impropriety. Rabbi Hillel, on the other hand, had a more liberal view and taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason. If she burned his breakfast, put too much salt in his food, showed disrespect to him, spoke disrespectfully of her husband's parents in his presence, spoke to a man on the street, or even let her hair down in public, he could divorce her.

Rabbi Hillel's view was popular in Jesus' day. It was for this reason the scribes tested Him. They wanted Jesus to become unpopular with the people for they knew He would not side with this more liberal view. Jesus' view is the Biblical view as stated in Mal 2:16, where the Lord says, 'I hate divorce ...' Jesus did not directly answer their question. In versus 6-9 Jesus points to God's original intention way back in creation: marriage is meant to last a lifetime. Pray that the Lord will preserve your marriage and will keep you from straying from that relationship.

**Value the marriage relationship that God has given you and preserve it.
Guard the sanctity of marriage and flee from any thought of divorce or adultery.**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 28, PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday is the day we celebrate the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, one week before His resurrection (Matthew 21:1–11). As Jesus entered the holy city, He neared the culmination of a long journey toward Golgotha. He had come to save the lost (Luke 19:10), and now was the time—this was the place—to secure that salvation. Palm Sunday marked the start of what is often called “Passion Week,” the final seven days of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Palm Sunday was the “beginning of the end” of Jesus’ work on earth.

Palm Sunday began with Jesus and His disciples traveling over the Mount of Olives. The Lord sent two disciples ahead into the village of Bethphage to find an animal to ride. They found the unbroken colt of a donkey, just as Jesus had said they would (Luke 19:29–30). When they untied the colt, the owners began to question them. The disciples responded with the answer Jesus had provided: “The Lord needs it” (Luke 19:31–34). Amazingly, the owners were satisfied with that answer and let the disciples go. “They brought [the donkey] to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it” (Luke 19:35).

As Jesus ascended toward Jerusalem, a large multitude gathered around Him. This crowd understood that Jesus was the Messiah; what they did not understand was that it wasn’t time to set up the kingdom yet—although Jesus had tried to tell them so (Luke 19:11–12). The crowd’s actions along the road give rise to the name “Palm Sunday”: “A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road” (Matthew 21:8). In strewing their cloaks on the road, the people were giving Jesus the royal treatment—King Jehu was given similar honor at his coronation (2 Kings 9:13). John records the detail that the branches they cut were from palm trees (John 12:13).

On that first Palm Sunday, the people also honored Jesus verbally: “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!’” (Matthew 21:9). In their praise of Jesus, the Jewish crowds were quoting Psalm 118:25–26, an acknowledged prophecy of the Christ. The allusion to a Messianic psalm drew resentment from the religious leaders present: “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’” (Luke 19:39). However, Jesus saw no need to rebuke those who told the truth. He replied, “I tell you . . . if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40).

Some 450 to 500 years prior to Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem, the prophet Zechariah had prophesied the event we now call Palm Sunday: “Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! / Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! / See, your king comes to you, / righteous and victorious, / lowly and riding on a donkey, / on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). The prophecy was fulfilled in every particular, and it was indeed a time of rejoicing, as Jerusalem welcomed their King. Unfortunately, the celebration was not to last. The crowds looked for a Messiah who would rescue them *politically* and free them *nationally*, but Jesus had come to save them *spiritually*. First things first, and mankind’s primary need is spiritual, not political, cultural, or national salvation.

Even as the countless multitudes waved the palm branches and shouted for joy, they missed the true reason for Jesus’ presence. They could neither see nor understand the cross. That’s why, “as [Jesus] approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies . . . will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you’” (Luke 19:41–47). It is a tragic thing to see the Savior but not recognize Him for who He is. The crowds who were crying out “Hosanna!” on Palm Sunday were crying out “Crucify Him!” later that week (Matthew 27:22–23).

There is coming a day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11). The worship will be real then. Also, John records a scene in heaven that features the eternal celebration of the risen Lord: “There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were *holding palm branches in their hands*” (Revelation 7:9, emphasis added). These palm-bearing saints will shout, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (verse 10), and who can measure sum of their joy?

MAR 28, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

PASSION WEEK OR HOLY WEEK

Passion Week (also known as Holy Week) is the time from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday (Resurrection Sunday). Also included within Passion Week are Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, Spy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Passion Week is so named because of the passion with which Jesus willingly went to the cross in order to pay for the sins of His people. Passion Week is described in Matthew chapters 21–27; Mark chapters 11–15; Luke chapters 19–23; and John chapters 12–19. Passion Week begins with the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday on the back of a colt as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9.

Passion Week contained several memorable events. Jesus cleansed the Temple for the second time (Luke 19:45–46), then disputed with the Pharisees regarding His authority. Then He gave His Olivet Discourse on the end times and taught many things, including the signs of His second coming. Jesus ate His Last Supper with His disciples in the upper room (Luke 22:7–38), then went to the garden of Gethsemane to pray as He waited for His hour to come. It was here that Jesus, having been betrayed by Judas, was arrested and taken to several sham trials before the chief priests, Pontius Pilate, and Herod (Luke 22:54–23:25).

Following the trials, Jesus was scourged at the hands of the Roman soldiers, then was forced to carry His own instrument of execution (the Cross) through the streets of Jerusalem along what is known as the Via Dolorosa (way of sorrows). Jesus was then crucified at Golgotha on the day before the Sabbath, was buried and remained in the tomb until Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, and then gloriously resurrected.

It is referred to as Passion Week because in that time, Jesus Christ truly revealed His passion for us in the suffering He willingly went through on our behalf. What should our attitude be during Passion Week? We should be passionate in our worship of Jesus and in our proclamation of His Gospel! As He suffered for us, so should we be willing to suffer for the cause of following Him and proclaiming the message of His death and resurrection.

MAR 29, MONDAY

Joh 12:1-11

Death And Doom Or Life-Giving Perfume

LENT MEDITATION – HOLY WEEK

The order was out. Anyone who saw Jesus was required to report it immediately so that the Jewish authorities could arrest Him. Yet Jesus came out of seclusion and returned to Bethany—the "crime scene" of Lazarus' resurrection.

Here, a dinner was given in His honour. Martha served while Lazarus dined with Jesus. Then came Mary who, in a shocking display of pure devotion, let her hair down and poured her best at Jesus' feet. As the aroma of worship filled the house, Judas Iscariot raised the familiar objection: "Why waste all that money? It should have been given to the poor!"— an ironic complaint by the disciples' treasurer who neither cared for the poor nor had any qualms about using their money to his own indulgence.

Having a real relationship with Jesus is a beautiful yet costly affair. When we truly know Him, we cannot help but worship. And worship is sacrifice. While Mary faced painful opposition from within, Lazarus became public enemy number two by simply being a walking, talking testimony of who Jesus is. To those on the path to destruction, it is the stench of death and doom. But to others, it is a life-giving perfume.

Which character do you identify with in today's Bible Reading?

God knows the depth of our hearts.

Allow Him to test your thoughts and lead you in the way everlasting.

Gracious Father, lead me in Your triumphant way. Draw me closer that I may know You better. Strengthen me and fill me with the joy that comes in worshipping You. Amen.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAR 30, TUESDAY

Joh 12:20–36

Seeking Jesus

LENT MEDITATION – HOLY WEEK

The Son of Man! Whatever others thought of Him, Jesus had no qualms about who He was. He saw Himself as "the Son of Man"—a human being, and yet also the prophesied divine Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14) to whom authority, glory and sovereign power would be given, before whom all nations and peoples of every language will one day bow and worship, and a King whose Kingdom is everlasting and imperishable. Wow!

But to realize this, the Son of Man must first die. He who would be King of kings and Lord of lords would be betrayed and arrested, mocked and spat at, beaten and nailed to the cross, pierced in His side, and then buried in a borrowed tomb. What a paradox!

And now "the time has come". To be glorified, He had to be crucified. To bring many sons and daughters to glory, He had to suffer shame and death. To bring about a "good harvest"—a harvest of people lost in darkness and doomed to death but now bought over to light and life (meaningful, fulfilling and everlasting)—He had to 'fall into the earth and die'

"We wish to see Jesus." But which Jesus were they looking for?

- **The powerful miracle-worker?**
- **The charismatic preacher?**
- **The counter-culture teacher?**

Dear God, help me to see Jesus as He really is. Take away all my false images of Jesus, and help me know Him as Your Son, my Savior and my Lord. Amen.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

"HOW IS THE DATE FOR EASTER DETERMINED?"

The four Gospels make it clear that Jesus was crucified in conjunction with the Jewish Passover (Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-15; John 18:28,39; 19:14). The four Gospels also make it clear that Jesus was raised from the dead three days later, on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19). Biblically speaking, then, Christ's resurrection should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the Jewish Passover meal.

However, this is not the case. Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox (March 21 in 2008, the first day of spring). This method of determining the date of Easter often results in Easter being before Passover and/or displaced far from Passover. Easter can potentially be observed anywhere between March 22 and April 25.

In church history, there was a significant amount of debate that went into determining when Easter would be observed. As a background, please read our article on the origins of Easter. Dating Easter in conjunction with the vernal equinox and full moon had nothing to do with the biblical account of Christ's resurrection or the Passover. It was pagan practices, such as the spring fertility goddess rituals that the Catholic Church "absorbed" and attempted to Christianize, that resulted in Easter's being linked to the vernal equinox and the full moon. The only thing that is biblical regarding when Easter is now observed is the fact that Easter is always on a Sunday.

The Bible does not instruct Christians to set aside a day to celebrate Christ's resurrection. At the same time, the resurrection is most assuredly worth celebrating (1 Corinthians chapter 15). Celebration of Christ's resurrection, then, is a matter of Christian freedom. Christians are free to celebrate the day of Christ's resurrection and are free to refrain from celebrating.

Since it is a matter of Christian freedom and not a biblical command, it would seem that there is also freedom as to precisely when the celebration of Christ's resurrection is observed. Just as with Christmas, the exact date is not important. It is the fact that Christ was resurrected that is important.

Christians are free to follow the traditional dating system for Easter, thereby observing Easter on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. At the same time, the lack of conjunction with Passover and the questionable (at best) motives for the method of scheduling Easter make it highly doubtful that Christ's resurrection is being celebrated according to the biblical calendar.

MAR 31, WEDNESDAY

Joh 13:21-32

Betraying Jesus

LENT MEDITATION – HOLY WEEK

"One of you is going to betray me. "One of my trusted twelve, whom I called by name, personally. One of you who has followed me through my journeys and ministry, up-close and personal, these three years. One of you who has been my apprentice, tutored and mentored by me, your Master and Teacher.

"One of you is going to betray me. "Who me? The disciples looked at one another with uncertainty and suspicion, in disbelief and perhaps even in fear. Would it be Simon Peter, the fiercely loyal leader of the band? Or John, the disciple whom Jesus loved? Or Judas, the keeper of the money? Or one of the others?

"One of you is going to betray me."Betrayal is a stab in the back. A sell-out. Treachery. Disloyalty. Abandonment. Double-crossing. The Devil had tempted Judas, and he had already caved-in in his heart (Joh 13:2). The Garden of Gethsemane would bring it to fruition. We know not the real reason for Judas' betrayal of Jesus. But we do know its price—thirty pieces of silver to Judas' coffers (Mat 26: 1 5), but crucifixion-death for Jesus. What? Pittance for the Son of Man's life! But betrayal brings guilt, and the burden can be excruciating. Judas regretted what he did. He returned the blood money and then hanged himself on a tree (Mat 27:1-10).

How are you like Judas?

How have you betrayed Jesus, your Saviour and Master?

Dear God, please forgive me for not being true to You. Forgive me for being ashamed of You before the watching world. Grant me courage to walk with You through thick and thin, even as You walk with me. Amen.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 1, MAUNDY THURSDAY

Joh 13:1-17, 31b-35

Following Jesus

LENT MEDITATION – HOLY WEEK

Jesus knew His time on earth was up, and He was soon to return to God the Father. He knew He would be betrayed to His enemies, and by whom. Despite the ignominy of the cross looming ahead, Jesus knew His mission and He was resolute in staying on-course. Why? Jesus' death would be ultimate proof of God's amazing love for us—that we sinners mired in hopelessness could now be reconciled to God, to find renewed hope and eternal life.

So Jesus gathered His closest disciples in the Upper Room for one last meal. During the supper, He got up from the table, bent low and washed His disciples' feet. He re-dressed as a servant, and He did what was reserved for the lowest of servants. His disciples must have been shocked, and wondered what this was all about. And Jesus said, "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Selfless servanthood—no task too low or dirty! May this be our example. May this be our mission, what we do. And may this be our character, who we are!

**How can you be a servant like Jesus?
To one another?**

To the world out there – family, friends, neighbours, workmates, fellow Malaysians?

Dear God, tear me away from my "privileged" mindset and behaviour. Help me be like Jesus—giving up my privileges and serving others selflessly for their betterment and good. Amen.

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAUNDY THURSDAY OR HOLY THURSDAY

Maundy Thursday, also known as “Holy Thursday,” is the Thursday of Passion Week, one day before Good Friday (the Friday before Easter). Maundy Thursday is the name given to the day on which Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples, known as the Last Supper.

Two important events are the focus of Maundy Thursday.

First, Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples and thereby instituted the Lord’s Supper, also called Communion (Luke 22:19-20). Some Christian churches observe a special Communion service on Maundy Thursday in memory of Jesus’ Last Supper with His disciples.

Second, Jesus washed the disciples’ feet as an act of humility and service, thereby setting an example that we should love and serve one another in humility (John 13:3-17). Some Christian churches observe a foot-washing ceremony on Maundy Thursday to commemorate Jesus’ washing the feet of the disciples.

The word *Maundy* is derived from the Latin word for “command.” The “Maundy” in “Maundy Thursday” refers to the command Jesus gave to the disciples at the Last Supper, that they should love and serve one another. Should we observe Maundy Thursday? The Bible neither commands nor forbids it. It is a good thing to remember the Last Supper and Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf. It is a good thing to remember the Lord’s example of humility. However, at the same time, we should avoid ritualistic observances of holidays unless they are truly focused on God and our relationship with Him.

Observing a special Lord’s Supper service on Maundy Thursday/Holy Thursday in remembrance of the Last Supper is a good thing to do. Doing a foot-washing in remembrance of how Christ humbled Himself and washed the feet of the disciples is a powerful reminder of how we are to live the Christian life (Philippians 2:1-11). Let’s just make sure we are observing Maundy Thursday in a way that truly honors what happened at the Last Supper.

APR 2, GOOD FRIDAY

Joh 18:1–19:42

Crucifying Jesus

LENT MEDITATION – HOLY WEEK

Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus? Because He had claimed to be the Son of God; that was blasphemy and punishable by death according to Jewish law. Because He had claimed to be King of the Jews, and anyone setting Himself up as 'king' defied Caesar and warranted the death penalty.

But Jesus' death was no accident nor a craft of human design. It was an integral part of God's sovereign plan to rescue us from the stranglehold of sin and to put us right with Himself. That necessitated Jesus coming down to earth as a human being (John 1:14), showing us the ways of the Father, and then giving up His life for us in utter obedience to His Father's will. Jesus said, 'No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.' (Joh 10:18, GNT)

"It is finished. "On the one hand, it meant Jesus' death. But more significantly, it meant that His life's work on behalf of His heavenly Father, for our benefit, was done. Mission accomplished! And our gains? Our sins forgiven, pardoned. Our peace with God restored. Our place as sons and daughters in God's family secured. Our fear of the grave buried. Our hope of life in all its fullness fulfilled.

Reflect on the journey that Jesus underwent before His final death on the cross.

What, in particular, resonates with you? What does it mean for you?

Dear God, I will never fully understand Jesus' death for me—the journey He underwent, the crucifixion, and why. But I know that He died for me because of Your utter love for us. Teach me to live in light of Your grace always. Amen.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

GOOD FRIDAY

Good Friday, also known as "Holy Friday," is the Friday immediately preceding Easter Sunday. It is celebrated traditionally as the day on which Jesus was crucified. If you are interested in a study of the issue, please see our article that discusses the various views on which day Jesus was crucified. Assuming that Jesus was crucified and died on a Friday, should Christians remember Jesus' death by celebrating Good Friday?

The Bible does not instruct Christians to remember Christ's death by honoring a certain day. The Bible does give us freedom in these matters, however. Romans 14:5 tells us, "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind."

Rather than remembering Christ's death on a certain day, once a year, the Bible instructs us to remember Christ's death by observing the Lord's Supper. First Corinthians 11:24-26 declares, "...do this in remembrance of me...for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Why is Good Friday referred to as "good"? What the Jewish authorities and Romans did to Jesus was definitely not good (see Matthew chapters 26-27). However, the results of Christ's death are very good! Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." First Peter 3:18 tells us, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."

Many Christian churches celebrate Good Friday with a subdued service, usually in the evening, in which Christ's death is remembered with solemn hymns, prayers of thanksgiving, a message centered on Christ's suffering for our sakes, and observance of the Lord's Supper.

Whether or not Christians choose to "celebrate" Good Friday, the events of that day should be ever on our minds because the death of Christ on the cross—along with His bodily resurrection—is the paramount event of the Christian faith.

APR 3, SATURDAY

Mat 27:57-66; Joh 19:38-42

Room For Jesus

LENT MEDITATION – HOLY WEEK

And she (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn (Luk 2:7). Jesus, the Son of God and God-with-us, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to Israel (Luk 1-2); yet "there was no room for them in the inn", and He had to be laid in a manger.

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luk 9:58). Jesus came to bear God's message of love and salvation for all; yet, when He came to his own, they rejected Him, hounded Him, and finally crucified Him. He came to give them life, but there was no room for Him in their lives.

So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb. At birth, so too in death, Jesus did not have His own place to pray. rest. He was laid in a borrowed tomb, that of Joseph of Arimathea.

Is there room in your heart for Jesus?

Is there room in your life for Jesus?

Reflect and Pray.

Dear God, forgive me for shutting You out of my life. I hear Your knocks on the door of my heart and I open it for You. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Make Your home in my life. Amen.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

EASTER SUNDAY or RESURRECTION SUNDAY

There is a lot of confusion regarding what Easter Sunday is all about. For some, Easter Sunday is about the Easter Bunny, colorfully decorated Easter eggs, and Easter egg hunts. Most people understand that Easter Sunday has something to do with the resurrection of Jesus, but are confused as to how the resurrection is related to the Easter eggs and the Easter bunny.

Biblically speaking, there is absolutely no connection between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the common modern traditions related to Easter Sunday. As a background, please read our article on the origins of Easter. Essentially, what occurred is that in order to make Christianity more attractive to non-Christians, the ancient Roman Catholic Church mixed the celebration of Jesus' resurrection with celebrations that involved spring fertility rituals. These spring fertility rituals are the source of the egg and bunny traditions.

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, Sunday (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19). Jesus' resurrection is most worthy of being celebrated (see 1 Corinthians 15). While it is appropriate for Jesus' resurrection to be celebrated on a Sunday, the day on which Jesus' resurrection is celebrated should not be referred to as Easter. Easter has nothing to do with Jesus' resurrection on a Sunday.

As a result, many Christians feel strongly that the day on which we celebrate Jesus' resurrection should not be referred to as "Easter Sunday." Rather, something like "Resurrection Sunday" would be far more appropriate and biblical. For the Christian, it is unthinkable that we would allow the silliness of Easter eggs and the Easter bunny to be the focus of the day instead of Jesus' resurrection.

By all means, celebrate Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. Christ's resurrection is something that should be celebrated every day, not just once a year. At the same time, if we choose to celebrate Easter Sunday, we should not allow the fun and games to distract our attention from what the day should truly be all about—the fact that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and that His resurrection demonstrates that we can indeed be promised an eternal home in Heaven by receiving Jesus as our Savior.

APR 4, RESURRECTION SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

APR 5, MONDAY

Mat 19:13-15; Mar 10:13-16; Luk 18:1-17

Persistent and Childlike-Faith

Luk 18:1b

I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Luk 18:17

The longer we wait for the Lord's return, the more we need persistent and humble childlike trust in our Lord. The widow's request is eventually obtained through her persistence (v.2-5). A superficial reading of the story might seem to make a comparison between the judge and God (v.6-8). We do not pray constantly to wear' God down because He always hears our prayers. Instead, we should pray in a way that leaves judgment to the Lord. We are to serve Him with diligence until He comes.

The Pharisee and the tax-collector contrast pride and humility. They came from different backgrounds (v.9-10) and prayed different prayers (v.11-13). The Pharisee is sure that he is a blessing to God but the tax-collector knows he is a sinner and seeks mercy. Jesus endorses the tax-collector's humility (v.14). The one justified before God, the one whose prayer was heard, is the tax collector. The prayer God hears is the call for mercy.

The following story (v.15-17) shows how subtle and difficult humility is. When Jesus was ministering, many sought to bring their children. The disciples were convinced that children were not important and a waste of time. Jesus took the opposite attitude. One must trust God with the simple faith and humility of a dependent child. Entrance into the kingdom is a matter of humility that recognizes a need for God. What is commended in children is their inherent dependency. They bring nothing but themselves to the feet of Jesus.

A child is persistent when in need and humble enough to know that help is needed to survive. The happiness and simple acceptance that a child displays when her needs are met are a joy to behold. All these are attitudes that can help us in our life of faith and journey with our Lord.

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 6, TUESDAY **Mat 19:16–30; Mar 10:17–31; Luk 18:18–30**

A Different Choice

Mat 19:26

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Mat 19:26

Most churches are short of workers and less and less numbers are entering the full-time Christian ministry. Is it a difficult choice to leave family, the world and all it has to offer?

The rich young man who came to Jesus must have been very sincere in his question about eternal life. That is why Jesus enumerated some of the commandments he should obey. What then was the lesson the young man had to learn? He had to learn that we live by our choices. If he wanted eternal life, then his love for God had to supersede just being good and his love for material things. It was a difficult lesson to learn and an even more difficult lesson to follow.

In Jewish culture, as in Asian culture, wealth is considered a blessing from God. So, it came as a surprise to the disciples when Jesus said that riches could be a deterrent to those wanting to enter the kingdom of God (v.23). When questioned further, Jesus said that with God all things are possible (v.26). God can make our desire for the things of the world and its attractions give way to our love for the kingdom.

Jesus went on to assure Peter and the disciples that their sacrificial life would have its reward in God’s kingdom. Jesus made it possible for Zacchaeus (Luk 19:1–9) and Nicodemus (Joh 3:1–21) to make difficult though right choices in their lives. May we also turn to Jesus to give us the enabling to make the choices that God wants us to make, however difficult they may be.

Thank You, Lord, for making eternal life possible for me. Help me to make choices in my life according to Your will, choices that will assure me of Your favor.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 7, WEDNESDAY

Mat 20:1-16

Heavenly Generosity

Mat 19:6

"Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last Mat 20:15-16

Our common sense may lead us to agree with the early workers in this parable; that their expectations were fair. Even in the church there is often a careful calculation of duties performed. Do those who do more, expect more respect? More honor? More status? Certainly those who have served longer expect some form of recognition.

Jesus teaches us, through this parable, that in God's kingdom, He is the judge. He is almighty and He decides what rewards we will receive. And there is nothing unjust about His decisions for He gives what He promises (v.13). God does not use man's standards in evaluating our service as it is in His nature to be generous. This parable would have upset the self-righteous religious leaders of Israel for they believed that only they were the worthy recipients of God's generosity. Because of their wrong understanding of God, they had the wrong attitude to service. Our attitude should be to serve God because of our love for Him.

Jesus' teaching, should serve as an encouragement for young Christians who are just starting to serve their Lord. It should teach long-standing leaders in the church not to begrudge or judge the service of others. It is God's vineyard and He is the landowner. He is just and generous, and He will give us immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us (Eph 3:20).

Teach me my God and King, In all things Thee to see
And what I do in anything, To do it as for Thee. - George Herbert -

**Are you expecting rewards from God for service rendered to Him? For worshipping in a particular church for many years? For serving as warden/elder or treasurer for many years?
God is more interested in your attitude than your work.**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 8, THURSDAY

Mat 20:17-28; Mar 10:32-45; Luk 18:31-34

What Is Important In Our Lives ?

Mar 10:45

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mar 10:43-45

Every one of us has our priorities and we know what we want to achieve in life. No doubt many of us want to be great and this is fueled by the public media. However, what is it that is really important to us? A big house, a big car or a big name? What are our priorities in life?

The disciples, at times, had misplaced priorities. Our text today is an illustration of this fact. James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, had some great ambitions. They wanted to go places. They had some dreams, some ambitions, and some very definite wants. But they often did not understand the implications of what they wanted.

Now, if our priorities are wrong, what we desire can hurt us. Like the disciples, we can have misplaced priorities. But we need to understand what is important to God. And we need to evaluate what our priorities should be in the light of His priorities for us. As believers, it is important for us periodically to be engaged in a re-evaluation of our values so that our lives stay right on target. We need to keep clearly before us just what is really important.

The path to greatness is service. Verse 45 says it all: *‘For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’* As the chorus says: *‘Brother, let me be your servant. Let me be as Christ to you ...’* The path to greatness is SERVICE.

**Pray that we will have the humility to serve others instead of desiring service from them.
Remember the time when your church needed help with some menial tasks?
What was your response? Be the first to volunteer no matter how menial the task is!**

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 9, FRIDAY Mat 20:29–34; Mar 10:46–52; Luk 18:35–43

The Desire Of A Blind Man

Mar 10:27

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Mar 10:47

I suppose it is ridiculous to ask a blind man what his greatest desire in life is. Mark, in this passage, wants us to go beyond the facts of the story and see some spiritual implications of the healing.

What we see in Bartimaeus is a suggestive aspiration. Bartimaeus was blind, and he had a desire to see. There is a symbolic application here. Bartimaeus was blind and he knew it. Jesus asked him the same question He had asked His disciples, 'What do you want Me to do for you (v 36)?' Bartimaeus' answer was far different from that of the disciples. He said: Rabboni, I want to regain my sight. 'The disciples were 'blind' as well, but they did not know it. They thought they could see but could not. Bartimaeus knew he could not see.

I believe what Mark is communicating is that we need to ask God to open our eyes, that we may see the implications of our desires. We need to have our eyes opened, that we may see what is important, really important to God. Because what is important to God ought to be important to us. The disciples' blindness is symbolic of the blindness of all God's children. With our eyes upon self, we cannot see. Our prayer needs to be, 'Lord, / want to regain my sight I want to see through Your eyes. I want to understand what's really important to You. Lord, help me to see.'

**Spiritual blindness can only be healed by spiritual medication.
Pray that we will not be spiritually blind and be able to see our condition as one that
needs God's help.**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

Did Jesus heal two blind men (Matthew 20:29–34) or one blind man (Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)?

In spite of apparent discrepancies, these three passages do refer to the same incident. The Matthew account cites two men healed as Jesus left Jericho. Mark and Luke refer to only one blind man healed, but Luke says it happened as Jesus was entering Jericho while Mark records it happening as He left Jericho. There are legitimate explanations for the apparent discrepancies. Let's look at them rather than deciding this is a contradiction and the Bible is in error.

That this is the same incident is seen in the similarity of the accounts, beginning with the two beggars sitting on the roadside. They call out to Jesus, referring to Him as "Son of David" (Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:38), and in all three accounts, they are rebuked by those nearby and told to be quiet but continue to shout out to Jesus (Matthew 20:31; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:39). The three accounts describe nearly identical conversations between Jesus and the beggars and the conclusions of the stories are also identical. The beggars receive their sight immediately and follow Jesus.

Only Mark chooses to identify one of the beggars as Bartimaeus, perhaps because Bartimaeus was known to Mark's readers, or they knew Bartimaeus's father, Timaeus, whereas the other blind man was a stranger to them. In any case, the fact that Mark and Luke only mention one beggar does not contradict Matthew's account. Mark and Luke never say there was *only* one beggar. They simply focus on the one, Bartimaeus, who was probably the more vocal of the two. Matthew refers to both of the blind men calling out to Jesus, clearly indicating there were two.

The other issue in question is whether Jesus was entering Jericho or leaving it. Bible commentators cite the fact that at that time there were two Jerichos - one the mound of the ancient city (still existing today) and the other the inhabited city of Jericho. Therefore, Jesus could have healed the two men as He was leaving the ancient city of Jericho and entering the new city of Jericho.

In any case, to focus on these minor details to the exclusion of all else is to miss the point of the story—Jesus healed the blind men, proving that He was indeed the Son of God with powers beyond anything a mortal man could have. Unlike the Pharisees who refused to see what was before their eyes, our response to Jesus should be the same as that of the blind men—call on Him to give us eyes to see spiritual truth, recognize Him for who He is, and follow Him.

APR 10, SATURDAY

Mat 25:14-30; Luk 19:1-27

The King's Servants are to be Found Faithful

Luk 19:26

He replied, I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.' Luk 19:26

The Bible tells us that we will have to give an account of our lives to God when we face Him. As Jesus draws near to Jerusalem, expectation rises that the kingdom will be decisively brought in (v 11). Jesus must inform His disciples that the full expression of kingdom authority will not come until His return, and He must explain what He expects of them in the meantime.

A man of noble birth goes to a far country 'to have himself appointed king and then to return.' He calls ten servants and gives each of them a mina (v.12-13). On his return, the first servant has earned ten more and the second five more. The third servant simply returns the mina, having hid it in a cloth, and explains why. Those who earn more are rewarded but what the third servant has is taken away. The third servant is called 'wicked' (v 22) and he is judged according to his own attitude.

The judgment is a time of blessing to those who have walked with God. We have nothing to fear if we have been faithful stewards and it will be a time for affirmation. God has given us abilities and resources (minas) through which to serve the church. We increase the benefits that come to the body through our applying these gifts. Jesus exhorts us here to apply ourselves fully to the task, so that in the day of His assessment, our stewardship may be an occasion for rejoicing (I Cor 4:5).

This is the last of the parables in Luke. So far, Jesus has been preparing His disciples for the climax in the Gospel story. Here He also prepares them for the timing of His coming again. This parable is to teach us to be productive disciples until He comes. Is there anything we need to do so that we can give a good account to our Lord when He comes?

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 11, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

APR 12, MONDAY

Joh 11:1-44

'Loose him and let him Go'

Joh 11:25-26

'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.' Joh 11:25-26

Bethany was a small village a short distance away from Jerusalem. Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus arrives. Martha, on hearing of His imminent arrival, goes out to meet Him.

Some might construe that what she says to Jesus is an expression of a gentle reproach (v.21) for having delayed His arrival; perhaps it is more likely an utterance of poignant grief as she knew that He would not be able to make it on time. In the exchange that takes place between them she expresses her confidence that God will grant Jesus any request He makes. To His assurance that Lazarus will rise again, she expresses the general belief that it will happen 'at the last day'. Jesus then makes His fifth great 'I am' statement: 'I am the resurrection and the life'. One who believes in Him (is united with Him) will be raised again or be transformed and will enter into life that is life indeed. 'Do you believe this?' He challenges her.

Martha's confession, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world' (v.27) is one in a long line of confessions concerning Jesus mentioned by John in the Gospel (1:29,41,45; 4:29,39,42; 9:38). Later, Mary meets Jesus and falls at His feet weeping. Her tears and those of her companions cause Him to be 'deeply moved in spirit and troubled' and He weeps too. Was it just a natural human response or a revulsion to the ravaging effect of human sin?

When Jesus orders that the tomb be opened, Martha protests, assuming that there will be a bad odor from a decaying corpse. They listen to Him, however, because He says. 'If you believe you will see the glory of God'. He then orders Lazarus to come out of the tomb, which he does. He then says to them. 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go'. This is the last miracle recorded by John to establish his case that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God' (20:31).

**This miracle finds expression in the believer's experience. When persons dead in sin are made alive through faith in Jesus Christ, the 'wrappings' that bind them in their old state must be ripped off. They are then set free to walk in newness of life.
Loose them and let them go!**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it" Joh 11:4

Jesus remained in the region 'across the Jordan' (10:40) for three or four months. He returned to Judea on receiving the urgent message from His good friends, Mary and Martha, that their brother Lazarus was seriously ill at their home in Bethany.

Jesus says. 'This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it' (v.4). So in spite of loving this family. Jesus delays going to them for two more days. However, then in what seems to be a sudden change of mind. He says, 'Let us go back to Judea.' His disciples are nonplussed for He had nearly been stoned when He was last there. His reply is very much in line with what He said when He healed the blind man (9:3-5). Beyond the obvious, surface meaning of His words, He was saying that He who is the light of the world must fulfil the Father's will (i.e. glorify Him) in the time that is available to Him. The disciples needed to learn that He had to fulfil His mission; there was no question of withdrawing from the confrontation with the hostile authorities.

Jesus then tells them that Lazarus is really dead but He will raise him. 'For your sake,' He says. 'I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe'. (If He had been there, Lazarus would not have died; it would have been just another case of healing.) They will now see such a manifestation of the glory of God that their faith in Him will be strengthened. Thomas is 'despairingly yet doggedly faithful' and says to the rest of disciples, 'Let us also go that we may die with him' (v.16).

Mary and Martha did, in their time of distress. 'send word to Jesus' that their brother was sick. Initially they didn't get the response they expected and hoped for.

- **It is a sound spiritual instinct for Christians to appeal to Jesus (through prayer) when in need. Christians have the great privilege of praying and making their requests known (Phi 4:6).**
- **God may grant, defer or deny such requests. Whatever He does will be in accordance with His will so that His name may be glorified.**
- **Christians may be inclined to maintain a low profile when confronted by hostile forces (v.8). They are challenged to develop a robust faith and be prepared to take up their cross and follow their Lord.**

Apr 13, TUESDAY Mat 26:6-13; Mar 14:1-9; Luk 7:36-50; Joh 12:1-11

We Are That Woman

Mar 10:27

"Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Luk 7:47

Jesus is at a Pharisee's house. A woman with a bad reputation comes in and performs a very intimate act: wiping Jesus' feet with perfume. Jesus, not for the first (nor last) time, becomes a target of murmuring and accusing voices.

But then what happens?

Jesus tells a wonderful story about outrageously forgiven debt and applies this to the woman. Her deed reflected her overpowering gratitude at having a great deb cast aside.

She has experienced the full removal of her burden, hence her all-out display of gratitude and love. The Pharisees, on the other hand, do not understand forgiveness (and barely consider themselves in need of healing), and therefore are unlikely to betray any emotional outpouring of gratitude like the woman. Indeed, 'her many sins have been forgiven-for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.'

This story is really about you and me. We put others under judgment, believing ourselves better than average. But the truth is that we are like the woman, as hopeless and stained as she is.

Do we realize the depth of our debts?

Is our personal corruption, and hence personal need for God, clear to us?

Or are we blinded by our critical view of others, especially 'easy targets' like people with questionable reputations?

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

Are Simon the Leper and Simon the Pharisee the same?

NOTE by Ps Ng : This is just one explanation that assumes only ONE ANOINTING. Others think there were TWO ANOINTINGS while a few even suggest THREE ANOINTINGS events. The lesson and application however remains the same irrespective of the numbers.

All four Gospels tell a story of a woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume, but the accounts differ, and it is usually presumed that they are based on two events – with two different women anointing Jesus on different occasions, one in the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany and the other in the home of a Pharisee named Simon.

But a careful comparison of the stories reveals a clearer picture – and carries an important lesson. The accounts of Matthew, Mark and John are often thought to reflect an occasion regarding Mary, the sister of Martha (John 11:2), and the account in Luke to reflect another incident regarding a different woman who had lived a sinful life. But all the apparent differences between the stories can be easily reconciled. For example, Matthew and Mark say the woman anointed Jesus' head, the other gospels say his feet were anointed. But the woman may well have anointed Christ's head and feet – recorded differently according to the stress the individual Gospel writers had in mind (i.e., the head for a kingly anointing, or an anointing for burial).

It would be a strange coincidence if two women had both anointed Jesus with the same kind of expensive perfume and wiped his feet with their hair. If they were different women, why did the Gospel writers not differentiate them in some way? On the other hand, that Mary sister of Martha was the one woman who anointed Christ may perhaps be seen earlier in John's account where he tells us: "(This Mary... was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)" (John 11:2) – saying "the same one who" rather than "one of the women who." It would also be strange if not one of the four gospel writers recorded both events, if two similar events had occurred. This is especially true considering Jesus' words in Mark 14:9: "Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Would Christ have put so much emphasis on this event if it was the second instance of two virtually identical cases? If this had been done by two different women, surely both would be clearly recorded.

That the various accounts regarding the woman who anointed Christ's feet involve the same event has another aspect to it. Luke's account says the event occurred in the home of a Pharisee named Simon, the others say it was in the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany. But Simon the Leper and Simon the Pharisee were probably one and the same. A leper could never have hosted a dinner nor have partaken in one with other people – Simon the Leper must have been healed and could thus have been the same as Simon the Pharisee. Simon may well have been referred to as "the Pharisee" in Luke because Luke stresses Jesus' reply to Simon's pharisaical and self-righteous attitude, while the other Gospels remember him as Simon the Leper.

Why does this matter? If Simon the Leper and Simon the Pharisee are one and the same, then Jesus' words to this man take on far greater meaning. Commentaries on Luke: 7:36-50 usually stress the fact that Jesus pointed out to the Pharisee that he had not welcomed Jesus as the woman did, but we should notice the context, and what Jesus actually stresses before he continued to make a comparison between the woman and Simon:

"Jesus answered him, 'Simon, I have something to tell you.' 'Tell me, teacher,' he said. 'Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?' Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.' 'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said" (Luke 7:40-43).

Why did Jesus talk to the Pharisee about gratitude for forgiveness? Notice Christ said two people had been forgiven, one of much, one of less – and made the point that the one forgiven more, loved more. If Simon the Pharisee had been forgiven sins and healed of leprosy by Jesus, this part of the story makes perfect sense. Simon is the one forgiven a smaller amount, Mary the one forgiven a greater amount, but who then loved more.

But Jesus' comment to the Pharisee cuts to the heart of any self-righteous understanding of forgiveness. In speaking to the Pharisee as Jesus did, he showed the man the hypocrisy of accepting forgiveness and still looking askance at others as sinners. Jesus' words showed not only that those forgiven more, love more – and may show much more gratitude – but also that those of us forgiven anything are in no position to judge others self-righteously, no matter how much they may have sinned. To look at God's forgiveness in any other way, Jesus shows us, is to walk in the shoes of someone blind to their own self-righteousness. It is to walk in the shoes of a Pharisee.

APR 14, WEDNESDAY Mat 26:1-5,14-16; Mar 14:10-11; Luk 21:37-22:6; Joh 11:45-57

An Insider's Plot

Joh 11:49-50

And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. Luk 22:4

When sin is exposed, our curiosity first leads to an interest in the scandalous aspects of the case. We then ask questions to find out the reasons behind the actions. In this way, we distance ourselves from the specifics of the other's situation and distract ourselves from looking at our own potential to sin.

Sin comes in different guises. As the destructive effects take their course, it always involves a betrayal of God, of others and of the sinner himself. Luke does not give us any specific explanation for Judas Iscariot's disloyalty to his Master, except to tell us that 'Satan entered Judas' (v.3). Greed for money may have played a part as well (v.5). Satan's part in the betrayal of Jesus does not remove any of the responsibility from Judas.

Each one of us is responsible for our sin. Our own evil desires are frequently the real source of temptation (Jam 1:14). This does not exclude the power of Satan, but it is only when we act upon Satan's ungodly suggestions that we actually commit sin. Here, Satan has his way with Judas, leading him in a sinister direction, right into the hands of the chief priests and teachers of the law. These men from the religious establishment had long since wanted to arrest Jesus but were awaiting an appropriate time. Thousands had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. Had they made a premature move, they might have caused an uprising among the people, for Jesus was greatly admired. As an insider, Judas' scheme gave them the perfect opportunity.

Judas' treachery reminds us to be aware of our own potential to betray Jesus. Judas was an insider, part of the company of the Twelve who had accompanied Jesus throughout His ministry. Therefore Christians, even those in leadership, are susceptible to such failure. We too can betray Jesus in subtle ways, as the temptations of life ensnare us.

**Lord, I acknowledge that even I could betray You.
Grant me the strength and grace to remain faithful to You always. Amen**

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 15, THURSDAY Mat 21:1-11; Mar 11:1-11; Luk 19:28-44; Joh 12:12-19

The Servant King

Luk 19:38

"See, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." Joh 12:15

While the other Gospels refer to how the young donkey (colt) was obtained, only John mentions that 'Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it.' His riding into Jerusalem fulfilled the prophecy mentioned in Zechariah 9:9. It is obvious that Jesus deliberately set out to fulfil the prophecy. His purpose being to arouse the enthusiasm of the masses. However by riding into Jerusalem on a lowly colt, the foal of a donkey and not on a war charger. He indicated that He had not come as the conquering hero - the type of Messiah they long hoped for - but as the Prince of Peace. Who were the people who witnessed this visitation of Jesus?

First of all, there were those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead. These 'continued to spread the word' (v.17) regarding the miracle. Then there were the 'many people' who had gone earlier to Jerusalem for the feast and had 'heard that He had given this miraculous sign'. These went out to meet Him with palm branches, shouting 'Hosanna', greeting Him as King of Israel (vs 12-13. 18).The Pharisees reacted very differently. They were completely frustrated at the turn of events - 'Look how the whole world has gone after him' (v.19).They had originally decided to kill Him after the Passover Feast (Mar 14:2) but the excitement of the crowd was one of the factors that caused them to hasten the arrest and trial of Jesus. It is ironic but significant that He, the antitype of the Passover Lamb, should be earmarked for sacrifice at the time of the Passover Feast. Finally, we read that the disciples (who were also present) did not understand what was happening (v.16). Only after the death and resurrection of the Lord did they realize that it was all in accordance with God's plan.

The experiences of those involved in this episode may well reflect the conversion experience of Christians. Like the disciples, we need to understand and appreciate Christ's atonement under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. Like the 'many people' who heard what Christ had done, we need to respond with our 'hosannas' and 'shouts' of gratitude. Like the crowd which saw the miracle of the 'dead' becoming 'alive', we too need 'to spread the word' (v.17).

The conversion experience includes knowing (understanding),feeling (gratitude) and acting (spreading the word). Unfortunately, there are those like the Pharisees, who for various reasons, stubbornly reject the revelation of the Christ.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 16, FRIDAY Mat 21:12–22; Mar 11:12–26; Luk 19:45–48

Faith and Forgiveness

Mar 11:24

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mar 11:24

In this passage Jesus is not giving a formula for cursing fig trees. Rather, He is revealing the principle and priority of life. He is revealing to us the dynamic of a faith priority, the dynamic of a life of faith, so that we will not be cursed like that fig tree.

Faith should be the priority of our Christian living. God is calling us to a relationship with Himself, to communion with Him and fellowship with Him. He is calling us to a life of prayer, a life of trust, a life of faith. Through a relationship with Jesus Christ, we come to know God. Through daily communion with Him in prayer and reading His word, our faith is built up and grows strong. As we follow Jesus daily, we come to trust Him more. As we grow in that trust and in the knowledge of His word, we come to know His will. And when we know His will, we do not doubt, but we are able to pray in power, knowing the Lord hears us. And when we know His will, we know that those things for which we pray will be done, perhaps not according to our timetable, but they will come to pass.

To live a life of faith, we must also live a life of forgiveness. Unforgiveness, which is based on pride, is certainly one mountain that needs to be moved out of the way. Unforgiveness, in itself, is a block to our receiving forgiveness. V.26 in our text is also found in the Lord's Prayer. He says, 'But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father, who is in heaven, forgive your transgressions.' Unforgiveness blocks our relationship with God. God will not forgive us if we do not forgive others. Unforgiveness blocks our faith. It blocks our power in prayer.

We can avoid lifeless, fruitless religion by:

- cultivating a life of faith
- developing our relationship with Jesus
- rekindling our first love
- coming to Him in humble repentance
- being willing to forgive and receive His forgiveness.

Where are you in your relationship with God right now?

Do you see the emptiness of religion without a vital faith relationship with Jesus?

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 17, SATURDAY Mat 21:23-27; Mar 11:27-33; Luk 20:1-8

They Feared the People

Luk 20:7

So they answered, "We don't know where it was from." Luk 20:7

What a telling exchange between Jesus and the religious establishment! The question regarding the source of Jesus' authority comes from the chief priests (former high priests and priests with permanent duties in the temple), the teachers of the law (learned legal experts) and the elders (laymen drawn from the wealthy aristocracy). These leaders had their security shaken by the popularity Jesus was gaining among the people. This moment disclosed their motives. They had failed to recognize John's baptism as authentic. Many of them had refused to be baptized by John (7:30), thus privately declaring they did not need the baptism of repentance.

Now confronted by Jesus' piercing question (v.4), they hold a behind-the-scenes dialogue to formulate a politically correct answer. Their answer, pleading ignorance, was no more than an evasion of the truth that they knew was evident even to the people. Their response clearly revealed their duplicity as religious politicians, concerned with power and position, rather than the truth as revealed by Jesus.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus had given plenty of evidence about the true source of His authority (5:24, 11:20). His ministry was sufficient testimony. It was not due to any lack of evidence that they doubted. The leaders' show of religiosity was meant to please the people, not primarily to honor God. This is always a danger for those who have been Christian leaders for many years. It is easy for us to pay more attention to religious structures rather than to maintain God's truth, because that may make us unpopular. When this happens, our Christian witness is deeply compromised. Such a lack of integrity has serious consequences for the body of Christ. It takes deep courage and honesty to allow God to challenge our 'status quo', to humbly admit any mistakes and to honor God's truth.

Pray for those in positions of Christian leadership, both in churches as well as Christian organizations. Ask God to help them remain faithful to His truth and to honor Him rather than find their security in popular opinion.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 18, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

APR 19, MONDAY Mat 21:28-46; Mar 12:1-12; Luk 20:9-19

God's Forbearance

Luk 18:1b

Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love: perhaps they will respect him.' Luk 20:13

What does the long-suffering patience of God look like? In this parable, Jesus gives a vivid description: a landowner rented his vineyard to tenant farmers but when it was time to collect payment, he reaped only insults in the form of battered servants who were sent away empty handed. He finally decides to send his beloved son, in the hope of a more positive result. After the shameful treatment of his servants, this action seems imprudent, if not downright foolish and, indeed, his son is brutally murdered. This parable reviews Israel's history of response to God and God's activity in salvation. The nation is persistently unfaithful (Neh 9:26, Jer 44:4) and abuses the many prophets sent to them. They have no fruit to give God (13:6-9).

When we look back, we will surely remember times in our lives when we ourselves took advantage of God's provision. We were irresponsible with His gifts and treated Him like an absentee landowner, easily betrayed and cheated. Yet, in His loving way, God pursued us, sometimes for many years, before we responded to His loving overtures. In the Old Testament, God's forbearance and faithful love is beautifully expressed by the prophet Hosea (Hos 2:14-20). Before taking note of God's judgment (yes, continued rebellion will meet with certain judgment), it is important that we pause first to appreciate God's forbearance.

Sometimes, we easily lose patience with those who have yet to experience God's transforming grace. Sharing the Gospel includes being a witness to God's long-suffering love and patience for a lost world. It may not make sense to keep trying, to repeatedly extend grace to those who laugh in our face. But neither did it make sense for God to send His Son to those who would scorn and finally kill Him.

In Scripture, God describes Himself as 'compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love' (Exo 34:6). How much of God's compassion and steadfast love have you experienced? How much of His forbearance are you willing to extend to others?

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 20, TUESDAY

Mat 22:15-33; Mar 12:13-27; Luk 20:20-40

Majoring in the Minors

Mar 12:27

Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?" Mar 12:24

The Bible is a living illustration of man’s tendency to major on the minors. Over and over in its pages, we see God calling His people back to Himself. In our text today, Jesus confronts the unbelieving Sadducees who were notorious for their lack of perspective. They were too focused on their own social status to focus on the things that were really important.

The Sadducees came to Jesus with a ridiculous question on the resurrection, which no one had been able to answer. Even though they did not believe in the resurrection (Acts 23:8), they used it to put Jesus in a bind. It was an unlikely scenario they described for Jesus, based on the law of levitate marriage (v 19) which was given by Moses in Deuteronomy 25.

It was an ancient custom whereby, if a married man died, his brother would marry the widow, thus preserving the family from dying out and keeping the family wealth intact. It was a convenient social custom. But the picture the Sadducees painted was a very unlikely one indeed. The question the Sadducees had was: whose wife would she be in the resurrection after seven husbands? Jesus, however, believed in the resurrection of the dead and He replied them in verse 24. He told them that they were greatly mistaken about the resurrection because of their ignorance of God’s word and power. The Sadducees were sidetracked on peripheral issues instead of concentrating on the things that really count - understanding the Scriptures and the power of God.

**Too often the church has spent too much of her time and energy on the man-made peripheral issues of the church and left out the more important issues.
 What are some things that are neither important, necessary nor Biblical?
 Look through them and see if you have neglected the more important things.
 Pray that we will always have a clear understanding of God’s word and live by it.**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 21, WEDNESDAY Mat 22:34-46; Mar 12:28-44; Luk 20:41-21:4

Love is a Many Splendored Thing

Mar 12:30-31

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these. Mar 12:30-31

Often we are surprised when the simplest concepts turn out to be the most profound. Yet, that is often the case. Take love for example. It is so simple, yet it defies a simple definition. If there ever was a topic, which could qualify as the most thought about, written about, talked about, sung about, it is certainly love.

In His reply to the scribe, Jesus pulls together two well-known passages of the Old Testament. One concerns our love for God; the other our love for our neighbor. The key is found in verse 30: 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is where we begin. Without a love for God, we will never go on to love our neighbor. The same can be said of the church. A church can be large and powerful, doctrinally pure and hard working, but when a church loses its first love, all else counts for nothing.

Without a love relationship with God, all that we do become meaningless. Without a love relationship with God, we lack the motivation and the passion to do His work. There is a desperate need today for a passionate, hot-hearted, intense, consuming love relationship with God. We must live it. We must commit our lives to it. We must surrender all that we are to all that He is, and dedicate ourselves to live for Him. Pray that the love for God will so permeate all that we do in and out of the church.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Analyze the many things you are doing today. How many are motivated by your love for God and how many are motivated by self? Pray that God will change that. Let everything be motivated by your love for God.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 22, THURSDAY

Mat 24:1-51

Are You Ready?

Mat 24:42

*"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."
Mat 24:42*

Some of us still have nightmares of sitting for exams for which we were not ready. What a relief it is when we wake up and discover it to be only a dream!

The nightmare scenario of what will happen to people who are not ready to receive Jesus when He returns is real. There is no way anybody can wake up one day and discover a completely different reality in life.

We are told in 2 Pet 2:5 that Noah warned the people of his day of impending judgement for their violent and corrupt ways. Knowing him to be a sane and righteous man, they ought to have taken his words seriously, but they chose not to. They carried on with life as usual to their own detriment (v.38, 39a). Likewise, those who reject the message of the Gospel will be totally unprepared to face Jesus when He returns (v.39b). At that time, the world's population will be divided, not according to race, color, status or wealth but according to whether they are ready to receive Jesus or not. Those who are ready will be taken away by Him (vs 40-41) while the rest will be left behind to face judgement.

Since Jesus mentions repeatedly (v.36, 42) that no one knows the time of His return (not even He), we should believe Him and not waste our time and money on speakers and books that attempt to work out the date of His return. Jesus says we are to, instead, 'keep watch' (v.42). There is a sense of urgency. The apostle Paul says we are to be alert and self-controlled (1 Thes 5:6). And if we happen to be leaders in church or in a Christian Fellowship, it will be to our benefit to take special note of verses 46-51. Leaders who nurture those under their care with gentleness and respect will be rewarded with greater responsibility while those who abuse or exploit them will be severely punished.

Reflect on your readiness to meet the Lord when He returns.

**Are you living your life with yourself at its center or is your life centered around Jesus?
If you need to turn your life around, it is better to do it now because later may be too late.**

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

Be Not Deceived

Mar 13:5

Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you." Mar 13:5

The FBI, it is said, trains its agents to recognize counterfeit money by repeatedly examining the genuine dollar notes closely. It is not the failure to discern the fake but the inability to recognize the genuine that stumbles us.

Jesus gives us warnings of what will happen in the end times. If we do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, we will not be able to recognize Him and His voice (Joh 10:4,14) and we will become discouraged. Watch out! We will be persecuted. We need to stand firm, keep our faith and boldly share the Gospel and our testimony. Do not be fearful or anxious for God will never let us down; He will never let us be pushed beyond our limits (1 Co 10:13). The Spirit of wisdom and truth will always be there to help us.

If we are not careful and watchful, we will be misled. In Asia, these days, we have all sorts of internationally acclaimed preachers holding seminars and conferences for those who are eager to go deeper or catch the fire of God. Signs and wonders are often present in these meetings. Our spiritual antennae need to be properly tuned because Jesus repeatedly warns against false prophets and false teachers. These are meant to deceive even the elect of God.

The elect of God are those who have repented and accepted Christ as Lord. They imitate Christ, endure suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit, and model faith and righteousness. They believe the message, obey God’s word and live it out in their lives. They make every effort to grow in faith, goodness, knowledge, perseverance, godliness, self-control, brotherly kindness and love (2 Pe 1:5-7).

What steps can we take to avoid being deceived by false teachers?

Pray for church leaders to be vigilant, that they may guard their flocks from false teaching.

P.R.A.Y	PRAY & PRAISE READ & REFLECT ASK & APPLY YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 24, SATURDAY

Luk 21:5-36

Be Prepared! Pray!

Mat 19:6

Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man. Luk 21:36

The temple in Jerusalem was not just beautiful. It was the national and religious symbol of God's presence among His people and the heart of their worship. Yet, it was going to fall apart. As a good leader, Jesus does not leave His disciples unprepared for the difficult times ahead. He warned them about false messiahs, natural disasters and persecutions. At the same time, He assured them that He would be with them. Moreover, He will return in glory to bring about His reign of peace and justice. However, the time is not for us to know (Act 1:7).

The temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. The persecutions prophesied by Jesus began soon after. Luke records many of them in the book of Acts. The apostle Paul and his fellow workers suffered much in the course of spreading the Gospel. In our own age, many are being persecuted for their faith. Natural disasters add to a seemingly gloomy picture of our world but we know that God is in control of the direction of history. Moreover, these are signs of Christ's imminent return.

As Christians, we are to be watchful and keep ourselves spiritually fit. Our minds and hearts can easily be dulled by careless living, or the excessive pursuit of pleasure to the extent of drunkenness and other addictive behavior. Even the normal cares of life can become a burden if we are not watchful. God's hand in history assures us that He determines the final outcome. We wait and watch with great anticipation, confident that Christ will return.

What are the things that consume much of your time and attention? Commit these to God.

Pray for strength and resolve to endure to the end.

We have Christ's promises to be with us to the end of the age (Matt 28:20).

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 25, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

APR 26, MONDAY

Mat 25:1-13

Locked Out !

Mat 25:13

I can still remember the night I locked myself out of my house. My wife and son had just left for the evening, and I had gone outside to close up the garage. When I went back to the house, I discovered that the door had blown shut. Everything was tightly secured. I had no choice but to remain out in the chilly air until my family returned.

As I sat there for several hours, I thought about how dreadful it will be for all who are "locked out" of heaven for eternity. Having waited too long and having never received Christ, they will suddenly face the terrifying reality that the door of salvation is closed to them forever!

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus told of five who had prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. When he came, they "went in with him to the wedding" (Mt. 25:10). Later, however, when the five foolish virgins tried to go in, the door was shut! In response to their pleas, they heard him answer, "I do not know you" (v.12).

If Christ should return right now, millions would share a similar fate. What about you? Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved" (Jn. 10:9). Have you accepted forgiveness through faith in the Savior? Don't risk being "locked out"!

By **Richard DeHaan**

**The day of life is passing by,
Soon night your soul will hide;
And then "too late" will be your cry
If you are just outside! —Rowe**

It's never too early to receive Christ, but at any moment it could be too late!

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 27, TUESDAY

Mat 25:14-30; Luk 19:11-27

The King's Servants are to be Found Faithful

Luk 19:26

He replied, I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.' Luk 19:26

The Bible tells us that we will have to give an account of our lives to God when we face Him. As Jesus draws near to Jerusalem, expectation rises that the kingdom will be decisively brought in (v.11). Jesus must inform His disciples that the full expression of kingdom authority will not come until His return, and He must explain what He expects of them in the meantime.

A man of noble birth goes to a far country 'to have himself appointed king and then to return.' He calls ten servants and gives each of them a mina (v.12-13). On his return, the first servant has earned ten more and the second five more. The third servant simply returns the mina, having hid it in a cloth, and explains why. Those who earn more are rewarded but what the third servant has is taken away. The third servant is called 'wicked' (v.22) and he is judged according to his own attitude.

The judgment is a time of blessing to those who have walked with God. We have nothing to fear if we have been faithful stewards and it will be a time for affirmation. God has given us abilities and resources (minas) through which to serve the church. We increase the benefits that come to the body through our applying these gifts. Jesus exhorts us here to apply ourselves fully to the task, so that in the day of His assessment, our stewardship may be an occasion for rejoicing (1 Cor 4:5).

This is the last of the parables in Luke. So far, Jesus has been preparing His disciples for the climax in the Gospel story. Here He also prepares them for the timing of His coming again.

This parable is to teach us to be productive disciples until He comes. Is there anything we need to do so that we can give a good account to our Lord when He comes?

P.R.A.Y PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 28, WEDNESDAY

Mat 25:31–46; Joh 12:20–50

Not Judge But Savior

Joh 12:25

"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."
 Joh 12:46

In chapters 2–12 of John’s Gospel, Jesus presents His claim, as having come from God, both by His words and His works, but the Jews, by and large, do not believe in Him. John, commenting on the attitude, gives the reasons for their unbelief. Quoting the prophet Isaiah (Isa 53), he says it is a fulfilment of the prophecy made by the prophet 700 years earlier. Quoting him again, John gives the reason for their unbelief.

Their eyes had been blinded and their hearts deadened (Isa 6:10).The result will be that they (the Jews) will not respond and be 'healed' (saved). John, however, comments that some of them, even among the Jewish leaders, 'believed' in Jesus, but were not prepared to confess their faith in Him publicly for fear of being ostracized and excommunicated' for they loved praise from men more than praise from God' (v.42–43).

Jesus' final comment is that whoever believes in Him, believes in God who sent Him. He did not come into the world to judge it but to be a light so that mankind by believing in Him need not grope in spiritual darkness and be cut off from God. But a day will come when those who reject the word He has spoken will be judged by the word. What He speaks is by command of God and His command leads to eternal life.

The great danger of consistently rejecting or neglecting God's message is that one can become 'Gospel hardened'. Jesus reiterates that it is not He but it is that rejected word that will bring condemnation 'at the last day'. What He says is what the Father has told Him to say.

There are many today who reject the message of the Gospel for various reasons. Some question the Lord's credentials ('Who is this 'Son of Man'?' v.34); others reject the words He spoke (v.48) and yet others, though they believe, will not confess their faith for fear of being ridiculed, rejected or persecuted or because they love men's praise rather than God's (v.42–43).

As Christians, we need to faithfully proclaim the word regardless of negative reactions.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 29, THURSDAY

Mat 26:17-19; Mar 14:12-16; Luk 22:7-13

The Preparation ...

Luk 18:1b

Lest we have doubts, these few verses reminds us that Jesus knew what he was getting into. Nor are we talking only about the foresight that prompts him to tell his disciples on several occasions that he will meet his death in Jerusalem.

Rather, we are at the level of something far more mundane: making arrangements to celebrate the Passover meal with his disciples in Jerusalem, the hotbed of the controversy surrounding him and stronghold of his opponents.

Some, I imagine, may read this passage as indicating Jesus' predictive ability – that he was prophesying that his disciples would meet a certain man who had a room available for them. But I think this was, as I said, far more mundane.

Anticipating his desire to spend the Passover – and, indeed, the last moments of his earthly life – with his disciples, Jesus had made plans ahead of time and now directed his disciples to execute those plans.

Mundane. But also courageous. It's one thing to respond to difficult or dangerous events that come upon us unexpectedly with a burst of sudden courage. It's another to see the difficulty and danger a great distance off and walk steadfastly toward it, facing the mounting fear and anxiety that such a fate occasions.

This is what these verses reveal: the mundane details of a courageous man who embraced his destiny in faith and confidence...all out of love for us.

Dear God, encourage us through the example of Jesus' courage; strengthen our faith as we witness his; increase our love as we recognize his love for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

APR 30, FRIDAY

Mat 26:20–29; Mar 14:17–25; Luk 22:14–22

The Lord's Supper

Luk 22:19–20

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many," he said to them. Mar 14:22-24

The Lord Jesus instituted the Lords Supper on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover Lamb. The Lord Himself was the Passover Lamb (Joh 1:29) and all the Old Testament prophecies of a Messiah who was King but also a suffering Servant (Isa 53) were about to be fulfilled in Him.

It was an unimaginably sorrowful evening for the Savior. The agonies of the cross lay ahead of Him. One of the 12 men who had shared His life was now going to betray Him. All of them would fall away (v.27) and Peter would disown the Savior three times (v.30).

The evening was also part of the most important week in the life of the Lord Jesus, and for us His church. Inscrutably resolute in His mission, the Lord Jesus gives thanks for the bread and cup (v.22–23) and declares the new covenant sealed by His blood (v 24).The disciples would only understand after all the events had unfolded and after the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of the Lord. Jesus spoke about His resurrection but a befuddled Peter reacted in rash bravado (v.29,31).

Let us partake of the Lord's Supper with sobriety and reverent awe. Guard against carelessness and frivolity. But don't forget the joy. Unmistakable joy! The Savior has died and risen again for me. My sins are forgiven. I am my Lord's and He is mine.

Lord, forgive me for the times I've come to Your Table carelessly. Please renew a right spirit within me and enable me to partake with sobriety, reverent awe and joy.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & YAKHAL

MAY 1, SATURDAY

Luk 22:23-30; Joh 13:1-30

The Servant Leader

Luk 22:26

But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. Luk 22:26

Jesus makes a simple yet powerful statement about the Christian definition of authority. It must have grieved Him. In the midst of sharing His last meal with His disciples, and reflecting on His coming suffering, the disciples began arguing over who was number one among them. This issue must have been an ongoing discussion among the disciples. Matthew and Mark have recorded this dispute in earlier settings (Mar 10:41-45, Mat 20:24-28).

Jesus points to the character of His own ministry. In the culture of His time, the greater person, the master, sits at table, while the lesser serves (v.27). Instead, Jesus has been among them 'as one who serves' (v.27). This is the spiritual legacy He leaves His disciples. He served the people with great compassion and He would soon demonstrate a service of even greater proportions, in laying down His life. John 13 tells us that before the meal, Jesus washed His disciples' feet as an act of humble service. His words are deeply rooted in personal example (Phil 2:5-11).

In our world today, leaders wield power and authority and seek glory and honor for themselves. People of rank and position expect and even demand to receive service and are offered the opportunity to 'call the shots'. The kingdom of God, however, does not operate according to power politics. Christians in positions of authority are mere stewards of the gifts they have been given to enable them to serve others. Biblical leadership is about humility and service. True greatness in God's eyes is not defined by position or office but by one's attitude towards service. God exalts those who humble themselves by serving the people they lead. Christianity must not sell out to the world's model of authority. The world's way of achieving honor and power has no place in God's kingdom.

What kind of leader are you? What kind of follower are you? Pray that whether we lead or follow, we may always serve others with a spirit of humility.

P.R.A.Y

PRAY & PRAISE | READ & REFLECT | ASK & APPLY | YIELD & 'YAKHAL'

MAY 2, SUNDAY

Sunday Worship Celebration

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

PREACHER

“HE APPOINTED TWELVE THAT

they might be with him

AND THAT HE MIGHT SEND THEM OUT TO PREACH AND TO
HAVE AUTHORITY TO DRIVE OUT DEMONS.”

MARK 3:14-15



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