

WALKING WITH *Jesus*

**JANUARY - MARCH 2024
DAILY DEVOTIONAL**



Church Family,

As we move through 2024, we will be focused on Walking with Jesus. We will be learning how to be his disciple, and how to live our lives for his glory. So, throughout the year we will be spending time moving through the gospel stories of Jesus and passages of scripture that challenge us as apprentices of the Master.

This devotional book will help us on our journey. Each day we will read scripture, reflect on how it applies to our lives, and then spend time in prayer. Also, each Sunday, the passage of scripture will be the focus of our message in our worship services.

I hope that you will allow this book to call you into a deeper relationship with Jesus, and that you will learn to shape your life around his teachings.

Each quarter across this year we will release a new devotional book, and each book will also contain a special focus on a spiritual growth opportunity to help us grow. The focus for this quarter is a call to deepen our prayer life. So, please use the Prayer Guide you find in the next few pages and join us in the upcoming gatherings.

It is an honor to be on this journey with you.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large, prominent "B" at the beginning.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

Across the first 21 days of January 2024, we will begin the year with a focus on prayer. This season of congregational prayer is vital as we seek the Lord's will for our life and for our church. Having this opportunity to focus on prayer in January gives us the opportunity to submit the year to God and to ask that He help us use this year for His glory. This also gives us the opportunity to pray for our lives, our ministries, our neighbors, our nation, the lost, and to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Our Guiding Scriptures for our prayer focus are:

- Isaiah 56:7 – “These I will bring to My holy mountain and give them joy in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.”
- Acts 2:42 – “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Our Plan:

We will meet in Tyson Hall over the course of the first 3 weeks of January.

- On weekdays we will meet from 6:15-7:00 am
- On Saturdays we will meet from 8:30-9:15 am
- Following our in person gatherings we will move to the Fellowship Hall for coffee and snacks

We will not have in person gatherings on January 1st, 13th, or 15th. We will also not hold these gatherings on Sundays.

FASTING AND PRAYER

"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
Matthew 6:17-18

Many of you may choose to fast in some way during this time. Here are a few tips to consider in your fasting plan:
Fasting is the abstinence of physical food for spiritual purposes.

- F.A.S.T.
 - Focus on God
 - Abstain from food (or some other practice or activity)
 - Substitute the time with prayer and study
 - Taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8)
- Christians accompany fasting with prayer. Many Christians view fasting as a way to focus on prayer and to express a deeper commitment to prayer.
- While Biblical fasting most commonly refers to food, it can also mean to abstain from certain activities, practices, interests, to make room to focus on God. The intention of your heart is what is important.
- The reward that Jesus promises in Matthew 6 is more of Him!

Preparing to Fast:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you
- Set your objective for the fast (worship, spiritual renewal, guidance, healing, wisdom, repentance, etc.)
- Decide WHAT you will fast
- Decide HOW you plan to fast
- What will you drink? ...water, fresh juice, soup/broth, coffee
- What will you eat? ...set a goal
 - How long will you fast?
 - How often will you fast?
 - How will you seek to spend time with the Lord during your Fast?

AS WE START THE YEAR...

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:19

Methodist congregations have traditionally prayed the Covenant Prayer on the first day of the year. It can be used on January 1 and/or used any and every day:

Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me put to work for you or set aside for you. Praised for you or criticized for you. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service. And now, O wonderful and Holy God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it also be made in heaven. Amen.

A PLAN FOR PRAYER AND GATHERING

- January 1** No In-Person Gathering
Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer
Scriptures: Isaiah 43:19, Psalm 96
Focus: Give thanks to God for the start
of a new year.
- January 2** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Isaiah 56:7, Mark 21:12-13
- January 3** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Acts 2:42, Acts 4:29-31
- January 4** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Acts 3:19, Mark 1:14-15
- January 5** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scripture: Mark 11:28-30
- January 6** Gathering 8:30-9:15 AM
Scriptures: John 4:23, Psalm 34, Phil 2:9-11
- January 7** Worship in one of our morning services
- January 8** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scripture: John 15:1-11
- January 9** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Zechariah 4:6, Galatians 2:20

- January 10** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Nehemiah 4:14, Joshua 24:14-15
- January 11** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 3:20-21
- January 12** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: John 10:1-4, 14-16, Romans 12:10-15
- January 13** On your own
Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:1-13, 1 Peter 2:9,
Isaiah 6:8
- January 14** Worship in one of our morning services
- January 15** On your own
Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:1-4
- January 16** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: John 4:28-30, 39-42, Luke 10:30-37,
Acts 1:8
- January 17** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Matthew 28:19-20, Revelation 7:9-10,
Acts 1:8
- January 18** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: Luke 15, John 4:35
- January 19** Gathering 6:15-7:00 AM
Scriptures: James 5:14-16, 1 Peter 2:24
- January 20** Gathering 8:30-9:15AM
Scriptures: Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 13:15-16,
Revelation 2:4-11
- January 21** Worship in one of our morning services



01. JANUARY 1

ROMANS 6:4

As you start the New Year, Christ calls you to “walk in newness of life.” Where do you need to experience “newness” in your life? What habits can you develop this year to bring new life to your life?

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear Lord, you are the God who makes all things new. In you, the way things were can pass away, and a new life can be found. Help me to let go of the past and lean into the future you are calling me to embrace. Amen.

02. JANUARY 2

MARK 1:1-8

John was an interesting character. Everything about him seemed unique. But John knew that God had a plan for him, and he lived out that plan. How does your life blend in with the culture around you and how do you stand out for Christ? Where have you been bold for Christ, and where have you remained silent?

Reflections:

Prayer: God who knows me better than I know myself, and who sees my best moments and my greatest failures, help me to be bold for you as I live my life each day. Amen.

03. JANUARY 3

MARK 1:9-15

As Jesus began His ministry, God reminded Him that He was loved, and that God was with Him. So, Jesus set out to do what God has sent Him to do. That message for you is the same – God loves you and God is with you. Knowing that – what does Jesus call you to do? How do Jesus call you to live? What message do you need to share with the world?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, you claim me as your own child, and you are with me each moment of my day. Please give me courage to live for you and to speak your word, and share your message with my world today. Amen.

04. JANUARY 4

MARK 1:16-28

Jesus is the one who calls you to be his disciple. And with Jesus you have great power on your side. Even the demons of Hell are terrified of him because they know he is stronger than anyone or anything. What does it mean to you to know that the same Jesus who called Peter calls you too? What does it mean to know that this all-powerful Jesus is on your side?

Reflections:

Prayer: All-powerful Jesus who calls me to join you in your work in this world, give me the power to accomplish my purpose. Help me to remember that I am called to be a “fisher of people” as I help them experience you. Amen.

05. JANUARY 5

MARK 1:29-38

Things are picking up in Jesus' ministry. People are pushing and pulling on him as they come with their needs and their wants. Yet, in the midst of all that – Jesus goes off to pray. What do you usually do when you are stressed – more to do and not enough time? Why don't you follow Jesus' example – pray?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, you have given me the example of how I should live and act and react. Help me to realize that in moments of stress you found blessing from prayer and help me to develop that habit in my life as well. Amen.

06. JANUARY 6

MARK 1:39-45

It's a strange moment when things do go the way that Jesus wants them to go. So, he has to adapt so that he can stay true to his purpose. What do you do when you have a setback? Get mad and quit? Reroute and keep going?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, there are often roadblocks and detours along the way, and it is hard to keep going. Help me see the example of Jesus who adapted and overcame and never let a setback stop him. Amen.

07. JANUARY 7

MARK 1:4-11

As you prepare for worship, **Pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

OS. JANUARY 8

MARK 2:1-5

Four friends carried their friend through the streets, through the crowds, up onto the roof, tore open the roof, and lowered their friend down to Jesus. WOW! What an example of friendship. Who in your life needs you to be that kind of friend? Who are the friends you need to invite, bring, carry to church, to small group, to Sunday School, so that they can draw close to Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, so often my friendships are not like the four in the story. I will invite my friends to games, concerts, dinner, and coffee, but I haven't cared enough about them to invite them to church. Help me love them enough to invite them to experience your Son. Amen.

09. JANUARY 9

JOHN 1:29-34

Jesus came to be the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”. It is easy to accept that and to celebrate it because “the world” is out there and feels far away. But what that really means is that Jesus came to take away your sins. Where do you need to ask for forgiveness? Where do you know you are missing the mark and not living as Jesus calls you to live?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for taking away the sins of the world. Please forgive me. I am a sinner, and I need the gift of forgiveness that only you can give. Then, please help me to grow in my faith and my faithfulness. Amen.

10. JANUARY 10

MARK 2:6-12

When Jesus forgives the sins of the man, he also healed him and told him to go. Sometimes we don't think Jesus can forgive us of some of the sins in our life. Sometimes we think we are too bad or not worthy. Jesus can forgive. Where do you need to accept that Jesus has/can/will forgive you, and how do you need to move forward in your life?

Reflections:

Prayer: Help me, Lord, to be able to accept that you can forgive even me, and help me to stop holding back, but give me the courage to move forward following you. Amen.

11. JANUARY 11

MARK 2:13-17

Matthew was a tax collector, so, in many ways he was deemed a sinner by the Jewish people. Jesus said that people who think they are well don't go to the doctor – sick people flock to the doctor. Where in your life are you arrogant in thinking that you are ok? That your sin isn't as bad as others?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, break through my arrogance and my attitudes that I can lay my heart before you. Help me admit that I need you, the Great Physician, because there are many parts of my life that are unwell. Amen.

12. JANUARY 12

MARK 2:18-22

The idea of a new piece of cloth patching old clothes or pouring new wine in old wineskins may seem foreign, but the message tells us that we can't expect the new to fit with the old. If you want to be an apprentice of Jesus, a faithful disciple, where in your life do you need to make changes so that you aren't trying to be new while living the same old way?

Reflections:

Prayer: God help me have the courage to make the changes you know I need to make. Amen.

13. JANUARY 13

MARK 2:23-28

The sabbath was made for us. God rested on the seventh day. We are called to rest on the seventh day. But in our world – finding time to rest and give thanks to God doesn't come easy. How can you set aside time each week to focus on your faith? To spend time with God and God's people?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, you have given me the sabbath and it is a gift I have taken for granted. Help me change my schedule, adjust my week, and reorient the rhythms of my life so that I can spend time with you. Amen.

14. JANUARY 14

MATTHEW 11:25-30

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

15. JANUARY 15

MATTHEW 11:25-30

From his earliest ministry, the Jewish leaders were threatened by the power of Jesus. He was able to heal persons and make them whole. People believed that he was of God. Their business was the temple, and Jesus threatened what was for them a good financial and power arrangement. Keeping that status even by destroying one who could do such good was the choice they made.

Reflections:

Prayer: May I be willing to be a servant and give up my status and position so that your Kingdom can flourish in all situations. Amen.

16. JANUARY 16

MARK 3:13-27

The beginning of Jesus' ministry was like a switch: for thirty years he was a "tektion" (stone mason or carpenter - technician), then he became a Rabbi. The switch seems to come with no warning - suddenly there are disciples, crowds, concerned family, and childhood religious leaders. What had gotten into him? Beelzebub - the chief of demons who could cast out demons? There are moments in life when a switch gets flipped, and God's Spirit grabs us, and we cannot go back to what was. Friends and family think we have gone mad, but we become guided not by the cultural norms but by God's purposes.

Reflections:

Prayer: Give me the courage to be led by your purposes, that quiet voice inside, even if everyone around me thinks I have gone mad. Put people around me who know that voice, and your purposes, who can guide me to the paths of eternal life. Amen.

17. JANUARY 17

MATTHEW 12:9-14

I wonder what it would be like to have been that man - desperate that Jesus heal him but not wanting Jesus to get into even more trouble. But there was never any doubt in Jesus' mind. God sent Him to heal the sick and make the lame to walk. What purpose has God given you? What gifts do you have that can be used to bring healing into a world of hurt. Use those for good, no matter how others may perceive it.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, you have given me gifts and abilities that I often use in school or at work. Open the doors for me to use my gifts for you, and so discover my life purpose - always centered in you. Amen.

18. JANUARY 18

MARK 3:28-4:9

Our culture is filled with noise - phones, videos, televisions, computers, background music, restaurant chatter....it seems to come from everywhere. Jesus taught those by the seashore the very basics of the good news, explaining that some would grab hold of his teaching, and some would let it fall off like a seed on rocks. God is ever teaching us, but the struggle is for us to have "ears to hear" through all the competing noises - and truly let God's truth settle in us.

Reflections:

Prayer: Give me ears to hear the truth of the Gospel which can change my life and soul. May the other sounds fade as your truth speaks loudly. Amen.

19. JANUARY 19

MARK 4:10-25

Rarely does electricity go out, but when it does at night, we quickly start experimenting with how to best illuminate the largest spaces with the most light. A light that only shines down has very little value. Those high on a piece of furniture that point up illuminate the best. Jesus has just finished explaining in clear terms the meaning of tricky parable. They now knew the meaning of the riddles. They were now responsible to share the light they knew. Jesus told them, and us, to shine the truth of the Gospel brightly - not hiding it - but living in such a way that the world is illuminated.

Reflections:

Prayer: Let my light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Amen.

20. JANUARY 20

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2

In this passage, Paul is writing to a young man that he had been training as an evangelist / preacher / pastor for several years. But, there were other persons like Paul, preaching slightly or even distinctly different versions of the story and experience of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul was in a way warning Timothy - be sure that what you preach is the same message that I and other faithful followers have taught over the years. As one professor of mine once said, "If you are the first person to teach this idea, probably it is wrong." We have a faith handed down to us through Scripture, the Creeds, and faithful Christ-followers. Do all you can to continue that legacy of faithfulness - everything depends on it.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, help me make time to read your scripture, learn from wise teachers, and study the traditions of the church so that I am not fooled by new doctrine that is novel, but simply not true. Amen.

21. JANUARY 21

MARK 4:30-32

As you prepare for worship, **pray**: Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

22. JANUARY 22

MARK 5:1-13

Jesus' trip into the lands of Gentiles made a pretty big splash, just not what most expected as 2,000 pigs (unclean animals from Jewish perspective) were inhabited by demons and jumped off a cliff. The demons came from a man who had wandered the countryside, tormented for years by them. But they could not endure the presence of God in Jesus. I am often asked about demon possession, for often people fear these other powers. But in reality, all power is from God. And no power can overcome the power in Christ. So, we have nothing to fear - our God is all-powerful.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, when it seems that the powers of evil are at work in our world, and even close to home, may I never forget that nothing compares in power, so I have nothing to fear. Amen.

23. JANUARY 23

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Our culture is filled with influencers whose modus operandi is to impress with wit, products, oversized personality, and confidence - all to gain a following and thereby influence persons to buy a product or think a certain way. This passage from Paul in Philippians tells us that this is opposite of who Jesus was. It was not about influencing, impressing, exuding false confidence. To be a follower of Jesus is to move away from selfish ambition, arrogant attitude, and self-promoting pride. It is live a life of humility where my interests and needs are secondary to those of others. I become the servant, not the one served.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, give me the strength of character to not obsesses over my own needs for recognition and power, but to look for those in the shadows who are overlooked, and instead use my gifts and influence for them. Amen.

24. JANUARY 24

MARK 5:14-20

After Jesus cast out the demons from the possessed man, destroying 2,000 pigs in the process, the towns people became a bit concerned: Jesus was not good for the pork industry. Though they celebrated that man's return to sanity, the financial cost was substantial. The healed man wanted to come with Jesus - become a disciple - after all what did he have to lose for he had been the town lunatic for years. But Jesus had a ministry for him: instead of leaving town and starting over, go to those you know and proclaim the truth: God has come into the world, the God of Israel, and he has even come to save gentiles like me - and you. What situation would you like to leave and pretend never happened - family, work, community group. What if, instead of closing the door, God could use you to bring glory to God even in unpleasant circumstances.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, give me the courage not to run from my past failures and embarrassments, but to let them be redeemed and become a part of your great story of how even the worst moments can be used for good. Amen.

25. JANUARY 25

MARK 5:21-24

Mark has Jesus moving frequently from Jewish territory to the Decapolis, which was non-Jewish. It reflects Jesus' desire to bring the good news to the entire world, and not just the Jewish people. In truth, the Jewish people of Jesus' day had become self-engrained as the chosen people of God, forgetting their broader role of being a light to the Gentiles. In this passage, Jesus returns to find a Jewish leader practically begging Jesus to pray for his daughter. He does not seem concerned that Jesus is ritually unclean for going to Gentile areas, he just needs Jesus. And Mark simply says, "And he went with him." Is it not comforting that when we need Jesus the most, he is there, and simply is with us? No fuss, he has time for our needs.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may I have the courage to trust that when life is at its worst and I cannot see through the fog of doubt and difficulty, you hear my cry and "come with me." Help me to have the courage to simply ask, and then see your glory at work. Amen.

26. JANUARY 26

MARK 5:25-34

One can only imagine the horror this woman has been through, trying to find healing of a disorder in her reproductive system. Being in this constant state meant that by Jewish law she was an outcast and perpetually, ritually, unclean. She was desperate. She lunged and grabbed the tassels on the bottom of Jesus outer garment. The crowd was pressing all around, what could Jesus be talking about - practically everyone was. But this was different. Someone had faith and had taken a risk. She feared his wrath - touching Him would make Him unclean. But what she discovered was good news- her faith had made her whole. How often do we keep our problems to ourselves, worried what God will think of us, worried what God will say. But, instead of guilt and anger He is waiting to heal us and make us whole - living in right relationship with God again.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, forgive my vanity to think that you don't know me to my very core. You made me. You heal me. May I not try to hide my shortcomings, sins, struggles, and disappointments. You already know about them. You are simply waiting for me to have the courage to reach out for help. Amen.

27. JANUARY 27

MARK 5:35-43

This passage is a bit confusing. Jesus tells the parents to not tell the crowd that their daughter is alive and well, when they are outside crying and wailing because she was dead. Surely at some point they would figure it out when the dead girl came waltzing into the room at some point. Perhaps there is a little foreshadowing of the next chapter - Jesus' church rejects Him and his cousin John the Baptist is killed. Continuing to demonstrate miracles might move his greater plan for redeeming humanity to an early end. But even with the risk, Jesus once again heals the sick. Much of the early chapters of Mark tell of Jesus who just can't stop healing the sick, the rejected, the demon possessed. He spent his time with these people, and perhaps that is where we should spend our time as well.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may I know your heart, know your voice, know your ways and live my life reflecting those. You did not come to impress the cool kids, the social elite, or the religious leaders. You came to bring relief to the suffering, love to the rejected, hope to the hopeless. Amen.

28. JANUARY 28

LUKE 17:5-10

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

29. JANUARY 29

MARK 6:1-6

The people of Jesus' hometown did not recognize Jesus as a prophet (or more than a prophet) because he was a hometown boy. They already knew who he was and were unwilling to open their minds to anything new. Who do you say that Jesus is? If you do honor Jesus, who does that make you? Does it mean new allegiances that supersede traditional country and family values?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to see you for who you are—the One who died and rose again to save me and the entire world. Give me strength to make you the center of my life. Amen.

30. JANUARY 30

MARK 6:7-16

Jesus sends out his disciples in pairs and told them to travel light. This requires trust in God and in the hospitality of others. How do you witness to the power of Jesus? Does being a part of a church community affect your ability to tell others of Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, help me to witness to Christ not just with words, but with actions. Give me confidence and strength that others will see Jesus through me. Amen.

31. JANUARY 31

GALATIANS 6:9-10

It is easy to become discouraged when you try to live like Jesus and build his kingdom, but see no results. Paul, however, challenges us to continue doing good no matter what the outcome and place our trust in God for the results. How are you building God's kingdom today? Will you continue to build God's kingdom even if no results are evident?

Reflections:

Prayer: God of the Harvest, in my humanness I want results and affirmation. Yet my job is to continue to build the kingdom and let Your timing bring the harvest. Give me the faithfulness to trust in you, the Lord of the Harvest. Amen.

32. FEBRUARY 1

MARK 6:17-29

After King Herod Antipas married his brother's wife, John the Baptist confronted them for committing adultery. Although the King respected John's integrity, he had John killed due to pressure from his family and his peers. What we do under pressure often reveals our true nature. When have you succumbed to pressure and acted in a way not congruent with Jesus' teachings? What can you do now that will prevent crumbling to pressure in the future?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me strength and courage so I will always stand up to the pressure of my culture and instead devote my life to You and your teachings. Amen.

32. FEBRUARY 2

MARK 6:30-34

When the disciples returned from their mission, Jesus took them away to rest. How are you balancing a busy life with periodic rest and renewal? What could you add or subtract to achieve a better balance in your life?

Reflections:

Prayer: Holy One, in the midst of my over scheduled life, give me the wisdom to find my rest and respite in You. Help me to find the breathing space I need to be an effective disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

33. FEBRUARY 3

MARK 6:45-56

The disciples were shocked when they saw Jesus walking on water towards them. They had forgotten that Jesus would always help them in time of trouble. Have you ever lost sight of Jesus when the wind was against you? When is the last time you have been in deep water and Jesus showed up to help you? How did these encounters change your faith?

Reflections:

Prayer: I am grateful that even when I lose sight of Jesus, Jesus never loses sight of me. Help me O Lord, to put my faith and trust in the One who saves me each and every day. Amen.

34. FEBRUARY 4

MARK 1:29-39

As you prepare for worship, **pray**: Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

35. FEBRUARY 5

MARK 7:1-8

Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites because their worship was motivated by a desire to attain profit, to appear holy, and to increase their status. Is your worship motivated solely by your love for God or how your church participation looks in the eyes of the community? Do you have a tendency to emphasize the sins of others, or do you ask God to forgive your sins and direct your path?

Reflections:

Prayer: Almighty God, forgive me when my worship becomes a façade and is empty of love and commitment to the life and love of Jesus. Help me to focus on the rule of love so that people may see Jesus shine in my life. Amen.

36. FEBRUARY 6

MARK 7:9-13

The Pharisees used God as an excuse to ignore taking care of their families. They wanted their money to go to the Temple in public and ostentatious ways so their status would be increased in the eyes of the people. Do you give money and time to God without neglecting your responsibilities? How can you honor God by helping those in need?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, please continue to help me find balance in my life. Help me to always put you first, but never neglect those you have put into my care. May I be guided by your Word and not by the rules and expectations of my culture. Amen.

37. FEBRUARY 7

MARK 7:14-23

Jesus boldly challenges the dietary laws by saying sin begins in the inner attitudes of a person and not what we put into our bodies. Evils like greed, malice, deceit, envy, gossip, and slander are what makes us unclean. What are the areas of your life where you need to ask God to forgive you? How will you break the patterns of sin that enslave you?

Reflections:

Prayer: I am grateful, God of all Mercy, for Jesus whose death on a cross allowed my sins to be forgiven. Help me to root out the patterns of my behavior that lead me into sin instead of service as a disciple of Christ. Amen.

38. FEBRUARY 8

ROMANS 12:12

Paul gives us three things to remember and to put into practice. We always have hope because God's promises are true. Is your hope stronger than your fears? Are you patient in the difficult seasons of life? That is easier said than done, but we must trust and rest in God. Are you constant in your prayer life? Is your prayer life a priority or do you only rely on prayer when things go wrong? Which of these three things is the most difficult for you? How will you improve it?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me live out the words of Paul. Ground me in hope, give me the sure and certain knowledge you are with me so I can be patient in wilderness times, and let my prayer life be the foundation of all I do and believe. Amen.

39. FEBRUARY 9

MARK 7:24-30

Jesus appears harsh in this passage, but we cannot know what He was thinking when He first rejected this mother's request to heal her daughter. But the tenacious mother replies with a clever response and Jesus heals her daughter at a distance. Regardless of motivation, we see Jesus reaching out to the stranger, the outsider, and even the enemy. How do you reach out to those in need? Are you accepting of a larger vision of ministry, or do you prefer to limit outreach only to those who allow you to be comfortable? How can you better build God's kingdom?

Reflections:

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for scripture that confronts me, stretches me, and forces me to think. I pray you open my heart to new ministries for those who are different from me. Amen.

40. FEBRUARY 10

MARK 7:31-37

People bring a deaf and partially mute man to Jesus to heal him. Jesus heals the man with the phrase “be opened.” Are there places in your faith life where you are spiritually deaf or silent in your witness? Are you bringing people to Jesus so they might be healed.? How can your heart and spirit be opened to better serve Christ?

Reflections:

Prayer: We all need healing, Lord, whether it is physical or spiritual. Please send your healing power down upon me so I can continue to grow, to witness, and to bring others to Jesus. Amen.

41. FEBRUARY 11

MARK 9:2-9

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

42. FEBRUARY 12

MARK 8:1-13

The miracle of the feeding the 5000 reveals much about Jesus' nature~ His compassion, His provision, His authority, and his humanness. Our Savior is the same today. Do you trust God with all your needs? Will you be content and "satisfied" with the abundance God provides or do you ask for further proof of his grace?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you love me so well and you satisfy my deepest longings. Help me lay down my "leftovers" attitude and receive the bounty of your grace and goodness. Amen.

43. FEBRUARY 13

MARK 8:14-30

Jesus had fed the multitudes and healed the blind man, and the people still couldn't "see or understand" that He was the promised Messiah. Are we any different? Do you dismiss the wonder of His creation and disregard the awe of His sacrifice?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, my memory is short and I fail to remember your faithfulness. You ask me the same question, "Who do you say that I am?" Give me the boldness to answer with every fiber of my being, "My Lord, My love, and My God!" Amen.

44. FEBRUARY 14

MATTHEW 6: 1-6; 16:21

Jesus calls us to be vigilant about the motivations of our heart. Righteousness has no room for self-promotion or prayer performances. Our Lord did not perform miracles to gain the approval of men. Instead, He humbled himself to be the Servant and Savior of all mankind. What are the motivations of your heart? Where do you find your approval? On this Ash Wednesday, who will you surrender your life to, God or man?

Reflections:

Prayer: Father, guard my hearts against selfish ambition. In this season of preparation, help me to understand the sacrifice Jesus made for me. Thank you for turning the ashes of my life into a new creation in you. Amen.

45. FEBRUARY 15

MARK 15:1-39 (40-47)

The prophet Isaiah foretold Jesus' suffering and death. Psalm 22 echoes the words of Jesus' final cry. Jesus knew all that He would endure and chose us anyway. How can we fathom the cross and sorrows Jesus carried, and not fall to our knees in gratitude? He gave His life so that you could have everlasting life. This unfathomable love requires a response. What is yours?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, my only response to your redeeming love is to be transformed. Give me courage and boldness to tell the story of your lifesaving grace. Change me, forgive me, and then equip me to make disciples in this world and the next. Amen.

46. FEBRUARY 16

MARK 9:9-27

Sometimes our faith isn't as strong as we would like. We have questions and we have wonders. Sometimes we know that God is calling us to do something, try something, or risk something, but we are afraid to take that step. The good news is – God loves us enough to help us in those times. Where in your life do you need to admit – “I believe, help my unbelief”? What would it look like if you asked God to help you deepen your faith life so that you can follow him better?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, I believe, help my unbelief. Amen.

47. FEBRUARY 17

JOHN 17:6-19

Jesus calls upon the holiness of his Father to protect the disciples. He knows the evil that will seek to destroy them and the cost they will pay for following him. Jesus also reveals the nature of God the Father as just, righteous, and the source of all authority. Do you live your life as a forgiven son or daughter of the King? Do you join the Body of Christ to speak with one voice to proclaim the truth of our Salvation?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, just as you prayed for your disciples, you prayed for me that I would continue their legacy. Guard my heart from worldly temptations and perfect me in perfect unity. Amen.

48. FEBRUARY 18

JOHN 8:12

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

49. FEBRUARY 19

MARK 9:28-50

Jesus has just shared the news of His impending death and resurrection with the Twelve. Unable to digest the enormity of what's been said, they begin to argue. Corporate rankings and power plays overshadow Jesus' revelation of the days ahead. Isn't this a stark example of our default mode: anger, jealousy, prideful criticism.

But our Heavenly Father has graciously given us the Spirit of Truth, for just such an occasion. He reminds us we are loved without merit or favor. Each of us bring a purpose that is unique, yet crucial to the Body of Christ.

Reflections:

Prayer: Father, help me to view others through the same lens I view myself. Remind me I never need to compete for your affection. Amen.

50. FEBRUARY 20

MARK 10:1-9

Not all questions are black or white. Yes and no responses grow more rare as our world dissects the very existence and definition of words like “woman” and “man”. We are often faced with the choice of following cultural trends rather than Scriptural theology. God’s Word tells us we do not serve a God of confusion. We know the most powerful force on earth is God’s power in answering the prayers of His people. Yet, you guessed it, many times it is our last resort. Is it yours?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, you never leave me or abandon me. Thank you that I live through the power of your Holy Spirit. Beckon me to pray; draw me near and equip me to make disciples of all nations. Amen.

51. FEBRUARY 21

MARK 10:10-22

When we see someone in crisis, we often rush to help without regard for our own personal safety. But give up the treasures we've accumulated here on earth, and we stop to inventory our generosity. We measure our good deeds and promote our successes. Jesus stores our authentic treasure in Heaven, where there is no rust or decay. God provides our needs through the gift of His eternal, transformative grace. Which Master will you serve, God or man?

Reflections:

Prayer: Father you know the desires of my heart. Let me not confuse them with my true needs. Give me the pure heart of a child to approach you with total dependence. May I give freely my time, talent, service, and gifts. Amen.

52. FEBRUARY 22

MARK 10:23-31

Jesus uses sharp words to cut through the polished piousness of the rich ruler. "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

Jesus doesn't condemn the man but covers him with compassion. Do you identify with the trappings of wealth? Does your checkbook and your calendar reflect treasures stored in earthly vessels or eternal purposes? What "treasure" do you put before God?

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, pour into me that I may pour out your love to all creation. Make me a good steward of the blessings you have given me. Thank you that all things are possible with you! Amen.

53. FEBRUARY 23

MARK 10:33-40

For the third time, Jesus tells his disciples he will be handed over to the Gentiles and crucified. Again, the somber mood is eclipsed by an angry jockeying for position among the Twelve. James and John believe they are entitled to the top two positions in the seating chart of Jesus' Kingdom. "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." Is that the question we lead with when we talk to Jesus? Are we more about the blessings than belief?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you gave me the example of servant leadership. You humbled yourself as the Son of Man, to serve rather than be served. Help me to take the same cloak and give myself to others, rather than insisting on my selfish agendas. Amen.

54. FEBRUARY 24

MARK 10:41-52

How ironic! Jesus teaches us the best way to get ahead is actually to get behind. The roles of slave and master must be reversed. “The first will be last and the last first.” While He came to conquer sin through His death, He also came to serve and save mankind. Can we do anything but follow his example? There’s an old saying, “many hands make for short work.” There is Kingdom work to be done in every capacity. The Church could not function without many hands. How are you serving? Do your hands help build up the Body of Christ?

Reflections:

Prayer: Father, open my eyes and my heart to those that are neglected and forgotten. Keep me from making excuses and delegating the workload. Remind me that I, like Jesus, am here to serve for “the harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few.” Amen.

55. FEBRUARY 25

JOHN 10:11-18

As you prepare for worship, **pray**: Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

56. FEBRUARY 26

MARK 11:11-14

Jesus often spoke to His Disciples in parables. This passage, in which Jesus curses the fig tree, is subject to diverse interpretation. Does it symbolize God's judgement against Israel? Or, more simply, is the fig tree's cursing and subsequent withering, a cautionary tale of an unfruitful life? Do you use the blessings and advantages, God has given you, to multiply the harvest?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, sometimes I get confused when I study your Word. Inspire me to persevere. Let your love motivate me to grow deeper in my understanding and relationship with you. Let my life be a sheltering tree for fellow travelers and a source of provision for those that are hungry to know you. Amen.

57. FEBRUARY 27

MARK 11:15-19

The primary purpose for the church is to give God glory, to unite us as the Body of Christ, and to send us into the world to share the Gospel. However, we often make church into so many other things. Where have you allowed things that aren't mission critical become your obsession? Where have you focused on the unnecessary rather than building your life around the necessary?

Reflections:

Prayer: Thank you God for your holy Church. It is a blessing in my life and in my world. Help me to focus on the critical things and the necessary things so that I may worship you, find my place in your Body, and invite others to come and experience new life in you. Amen.

58. FEBRUARY 28

MARK 11:20-25

In this passage, Jesus and Peter have an interesting exchange regarding the withered fig tree. Peter reminds Jesus that Jesus had cursed the fig tree earlier in verse 12. Jesus uses this teaching moment to remind his disciples of the critical nature of faith and prayer. We are reminded to forgive as we seek forgiveness. Who do you seek forgiveness from? And who might you need to forgive?

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, I stand before you this morning reminded of your promise to forgive. Provide me the strength I need to ask for forgiveness. And provide me the strength I need to forgive those I need to forgive. Amen.

59. FEBRUARY 29

MARK 11:27-33

Jesus is confronted by the authorities in Jerusalem and is asked under what authority he does all of the things that he does. His response forces them to answer in a way that with either answer, Jesus catches the questioners in an unwelcomed answer. Jesus seems to show a bit of his humanity as He expresses no desire to explain to those who question Him “under whose authority he acts”. How does this interaction between Jesus and the authorities make you feel about Jesus? Are you able to see yourself in his humanity?

Reflections:

Prayer: God of grace and God of glory, allow me to hear your voice today as you walk alongside me. Remind me of your presence here on this Earth as both fully human and fully divine. Grant me the grace of patience and humility in all that I do today. Amen.

60. MARCH 1

MARK 12: 1-11

Jesus shares with those around him, both his disciples and the authorities who have been questioning him, in the parable of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. In perhaps one of his most foretelling parables, Jesus seems to indict all who have been unable to respond to God's calling of His people throughout history, but also to those who refuse to accept him as Messiah. How does the boldness of Jesus' parable help you to understand him as the Messiah?

Reflections:

Prayer: Almighty God, who speaks boldly throughout the ages as our Lord God Almighty, Creator and Redeemer of the World, allow us to see you for all you are- our creator, our redeemer, and our sustainer. Grant us your mercy, O God, as we seek to see you in all we say and do. Amen.

61. MARCH 2

MARK 12:12-17

Jesus is again being tested by those who seek to arrest Him, this time they try to trap Him by making a declaration over taxes. Jesus, again, wiser than those who seek to bait Him, responds with the answer that amazes all who hear Him- “pay unto the emperor the things that are the emperors and to God the things that are God’s”. This passage serves as a reminder of our role in society- not to be in this world but to be of this world. Do we return to God the things that belong to God with as much faithfulness as we pay what belongs to our governments?

Reflections:

Prayer: God of all, to whom I owe all that I am and all that I have, grant me the wisdom today to remember and to declare your role in my life. Assure me of your presence as I seek to declare your unwavering love for me. Amen.

62. MARCH 3

JOHN 11:25

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

63. MARCH 4

MARK 12:18-27

“He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.” Jesus responds to the questions of the Sadducees with a very direct rebuttal. Jesus is inundated with questions as people try to trap him into an arrestable offense. Not only does Jesus not become bogged down in the legalistic attempts to trap Him, but He also completely shifts his answer to speak to the depths of their faith. In doing so, Jesus once again alludes to his death and resurrection, by reminding those in attendance that God is the God of the LIVING.

Reflections:

Prayer: O God of the Living, remind me this, and every day, that you are the God of yesterday, today, and forever. In you, O God, I am surrounded by your love and mercy and your glorious kingdom awaits me. Amen.

64. MARCH 5

MARK 12:28-34

Our passage this morning provides us with one of the most understood and widely used glimpses into how our lives are directed to God. The First Commandment, in which Jesus so eloquently weaves in a Second, involve how we are to love God and love our neighbor. The scribe who hears His reply affirms for all to hear how exactly Jesus' response matches with exactly our calling in life. These deeply profound words mark our lives daily, and living in them, we too, "are not far from the kingdom of God".

Reflections:

Prayer: I love you, O God, with all that I am and with all that I have. Grant me the grace and mercy today to love my neighbor as myself. I yearn to be your presence here on earth, and I seek each day to live as you call me to live. Amen.

65. MARCH 6

MARK 12:35-44

While hearing of the hypocrisy of the Scribes, Jesus shares with those in the temple the simple lesson learned from the widow. She has given out of her poverty rather than out of abundance, making her gift truly sacrificial. What can we learn from the story of the widow that gives all she has? In this passage, we are confronted with the dangers of hypocrisy and the dangers of giving just to give, rather than giving sacrificially. How does this passage speak to how we present our faith when all are watching and how do we present our faith when no one is watching?

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, please forgive me of my hypocrisy in this world. Show me your paths of sacrificial giving that I may reflect my faith in you in all that I do. Amen.

66. MARCH 7

MARK 13:1-8

Jesus shares with his disciples the foreshadowing of the destruction of the temple in the first half of this passage and goes on to speak of the signs of His return. Jesus warns of false leaders coming in His name, and to be aware. The wars that will ravage the Earth are part of what must take place, along with earthquakes and famines. As we look through our past, we can see glimpses of times when all of these warnings were coming to fruition before our eyes. Yet, we are reminded that no one other than Jesus Himself knows when He will return. Do we focus on the signs Jesus speaks of more than we focus on our individual faith journey with Jesus, deepening that journey each day?

Reflections:

Prayer: Almighty God- only you know the time and place of your return. Until that day comes, allow me the strength to focus my energy on deepening my relationship with you. Amen.

67. MARCH 8

MARK 13:9-13

Jesus continues to share with His disciples the critical importance of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with all of the world. He speaks of being brought forth for trials and to not worry about what to say, for the Holy Spirit will provide the words to speak. Families will be torn apart over the importance of Jesus as Messiah, and we are all to beware of what it may require in this lifetime to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. How does my daily life, my need for control and knowledge, play into the idea that the Holy Spirit will always provide in times of trial? How strong must my faith be to face what Jesus foreshadows?

Reflections:

Prayer: God of strength and mercy- I need you this day and every day to assure me of my faith and to have the bold confidence to declare it to all of the nations. Holy Spirit, come and fill my voice with your words of grace and mercy. Amen.

GS. MARCH 9

MARK 13:14-20

Jesus shares with his disciples a frightening scene of days that seem horrific. There will be no time for preparation nor time for making amends. When there is desolate sacrilege, God will destroy the temple and all of Judea will suffer. While this passage is striking in its vitriol, let us be reminded of the magnitude of the temple and all who worshipped there. The city on a hill would be destroyed, the House Of God would be no more. For people in Judea, the emphasis was real- life would never be the same. What are the images of a modern society that, if destroyed, we all seek to flee in fear?

Reflections:

Prayer: O God who claims me, I understand your power and your might. I seek to live in unity with you in all that I do that I might be your presence here on Earth. Amen.

69. MARCH 10

JOHN 14:1-14

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

70. MARCH 11

MARK 13:21-27

In imagery familiar with His disciples, Jesus tells of His return. There will be false prophets and false messiahs, but there will also be darkness and light, and power and glory, and in those moments, angels will gather all of God's people. These images resonate with the disciples and their understanding of Jewish tradition and history. While the disciples may have felt unease, they are assured of His return based on their faith. Often times, our faith can be challenged- how deeply rooted is your faith?

Reflections:

Prayer: God of faith and God of wisdom, grant me the depth of faith needed to face adversity in this life and faith deep enough to remain in your presence for eternity. Amen.

71. MARCH 12

MARK 13:28-37

Many people focus and fuss about the end of days, the Second Coming, the rapture, etc. Jesus tells us that no one knows, and we are called to simply be prepared for whenever it might occur. That means we shouldn't put off following Jesus. If we are going to be "prepared" we need to always walk with Jesus. So, where are you putting off faithfulness? Where do you know God has gifted you and Jesus has called you, but you have said, "Later"?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, please help me to put you first in my life – always following you – always being your disciple. Help me be prepared for you and for all the opportunities you send my way. Amen.

72. MARCH 13

MARK 14:1-11

Our reading today is bookended by those who did not want to walk with Jesus, and centered around a woman who did. She was criticized, at first, for the way she approached the feet of the rabbi, but Jesus knew her heart. How can we better help others who are wanting a relationship with Christ without being an obstacle?

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you are the one who my heart is seeking. Help me not be quick to judge the good works of others, especially when others are longing to draw closer to you. Amen.

73. MARCH 14

MARK 14:12-21

Sometimes we have to really discern what God wants us to do, and I think at other times He gives us clear instructions, kind of like the disciples who entered the city. If we're being honest with ourselves then we know there are times when we either ignore or rebel from following God's will for our lives, similar to Judas in this story. But just as Christ's good purpose was to find a place to share one last time of fellowship with his friends, God has a good purpose when he instructs us.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, you see ten steps in front of me, and you are trustworthy and true because of it. Help me be faithful to the guidance you give us, like the disciples, being fully assured that you have my best interest at heart. Amen.

74. MARCH 15

MARK 14:22-42

We are reminded, both at the table and in the garden, that the Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many. Knowing full well, that He'd be despised, betrayed, abandoned, and killed. He came so that that our sins could be forgiven, and we could have communion with God.

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, I confess that I am broken, I have sinned against you and others, and I ask for your forgiveness. I thank you for your son, for he chose to walk the path that leads to eternal life for me. Amen.

75. MARCH 16

MARK 14:43-52

God's word is a unified story. In the very beginning of the Bible, Adam and Eve were tested in a garden but failed to follow God's will. When they failed, they became aware of their nakedness. Jesus enters a garden, only this time He passes the test and follows God's will. And as He is betrayed and led to die for us, a naked man runs away. So, there is nakedness, but not because someone failed the test, but because someone passed it on behalf of all of us who have failed.

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank you for your son, Jesus Christ. Because of his faithfulness to your will, He has bridged the gap and made a way for me to be forgiven and redeemed. Amen.

76. MARCH 17

JOHN 15:1-8

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

77. MARCH 18

MARK 14:53-72

In our reading today, Jesus is bombarded by lies from those who do not know Him and from one who does. This reading makes me reflect on all the times when I have denied my relationship with Christ by either ignoring or even hiding from opportunities to be a witness. As I dwell on the moments when I have bended to cultural norms or feared being made a pariah, I am grateful that Peter's story doesn't end with his denial, but God continues to walk with him and make him a more faithful disciple.

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for never denying me. You don't give up on me even when I stumble and am unfaithful. Help me to be a more ardent witness of your love and character in the world. Amen.

78. MARCH 19

MARK 15:1-14

Two figures stood before the crowd. One blameless, and the other guilty. The punishment intended for Barabbas, because of his transgressions, was instead placed upon the shoulders of God's son. Notice, and do not forget, how Jesus does not object to this miscarriage of justice. Jesus knew that by taking the place of Barabbas, we would all get to go free.

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am Barabbas. I have sinned and deserve its wages – death. I worship you, O God, because of your son who stood in my place. Amen.

79. MARCH 20

MARK 15:15-21

I find it difficult to glean any optimism from this reading. Our Lord and Savior, beaten and humiliated, is made a spectacle for the mocking soldiers and crowd. One thing that I find incomprehensible—Jesus still loves, forgives, and has compassion on His tormenters. How often do I fail to show compassion to others when they commit small transgressions against me?

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, your love is like a spring that never runs dry. Even when I commit sins that are big and small, you have new mercies for me every day. Help me to grow in the compassion that your son showed towards the soldiers and the crowd, that I may love as you love. Amen.

80. MARCH 21

MARK 15:22-32

It would be easy to avoid reading this passage, but I make myself be present with it so that I never forget the suffering that He went through. The cross, the nails and the crucifixion; He bore all of it for us. As I meditate on that truth, I am reminded of the words of the prophet Isaiah: “and by his wounds we are healed.”

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, I can't repay the price you paid for me. A price that you did not owe. There is no greater love than that of your son laying down his life so that I could be ransomed from death and walk in new life. Help me never forget that atonement and may it change me. Amen.

81. MARCH 22

MARK 15:33-47

Here is how powerful God's love shown through Christ's sacrifice is. All through Mark's gospel, the identity and reality of who Jesus is remains a mystery to both those close and opposed to Him. Yet, as Christ hung from the cross, having given His life for his people, it was not an educated member of the Sanhedrin or even one of His close disciples that unveiled the mystery. But the love that Christ showed is so far-reaching and transcendent that even a Roman soldier, a Gentile enemy of God's chosen people, can look up and be able to believe and confess "surely this man was the son of God."

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, I thank you that real love was shown on a cross. Who you are and what you have done has been made known to me. Help me to live as a bearer of that same self-giving love to all I encounter in the world. Amen.

82. MARCH 23

MARK 16:1-20

In many of our Bibles, we will see something like “[Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20]” within this passage. It’s an interesting way to read the story. Some of the earliest Christians who would have read Mark’s account of that Easter morning, might have only observed that Jesus’ followers were startled, afraid and did not know what to do. Those same early Christians would have watched their communities grow from the good news of Jesus Christ brought to them from those same scared people. This is how awesome the gospel is and is evidence of what can happen through the power of the Holy Spirit: that God can take a band of frightened, anxious people and use them to change the world.

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess to you that sometimes I am frightened and unsure of how to be a witness. I thank you for not giving up on me, and granting me your empowering spirit that strengthens and enables me to share and reveal the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. Amen.

83. MARCH 24

MARK 11:1-11

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

84. MARCH 25

JOHN 12:1-11

Throughout the day, week, and month, we have the capacity to accomplish a lot of good in the world. We can spend a lot of our time serving others, nurturing friendships living out our purpose. A key takeaway from this passage, however, is that we should never feel the need to rush or ignore the time that we get to spend with God. How can we all better protect and maximize the time we get to spend in prayer and meditation as we seek to be with God?

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, I am grateful that you chose to be with me, to know me and to give me the chance to know you. As I seek to become a more faithful disciple, help me to carve out and prioritize time that I get to spend with you. Amen.

85. MARCH 26

JOHN 12:20-36

One of the hardest images that Jesus gives us is that we are supposed to die to self in order to live to Him. But there are so many parts of our life that get us the praise we want from friends and family. There are so many parts of our life that we obsess over because the world tells us they are important. But those things do not lead to life. What things in your life need to “die” in order to live as God calls you to live?

Reflections:

Prayer: Dear God, it is often all about me and not about you. I let everyone tell me what is important, and I agree with them blindly. Help me to die to self so that I can live to you. Help me to learn to put you first and even put myself last. Amen.

26. MARCH 27

JOHN 13:21-32

Judas was one of Jesus' trusted disciples, treasurer for the group. But something snapped in Judas. Something about Jesus disappointed him to the point of utter rejection. None of us thinks we could be Judas. The Greek word for "Satan" is "satanos." It means tester, or perhaps auditor. Going back to the book of Job, this character had the job of testing followers of God to see their strength. When the audit came for Judas, what snapped? What disappointed him so much that he would, in a matter of hours, destroy Jesus and his ministry. There are days that it seems God sends the holy auditor into our lives. What can we handle? How much can we take? How will we react? May our love for God be so deep, our very definition and existence be so tied to God, that nothing is worth giving another way of life a second thought.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may I love you regardless of the difficulties of life. May I cling to you in the trials of life. May I trust you in the pain of life. For you are all I have. Who I am is inseparable from who you are. Give me the courage to trust even in the most discouraging moments. Amen.

87. MARCH 28

JOHN 13:1-17

Our culture promotes and thrives on self-sufficiency. Getting our own education. Getting our own job. Becoming financially independent. These are all of the measures of success. Serving others is something that we learn from Jesus. We, who have sufficiency, should serve those who struggle. But this passage teaches us another lesson from Jesus. We must learn to be served. We must learn to not be in charge. We must learn to let others lead and us follow. We must let others care for us, just as we care for others. God does not call us to be self-sufficient, God calls us to live in community, giving and receiving from those with whom we serve Jesus. If we are to share life with Jesus, we must learn to be servants and learn to be served.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, show me the places in life where I need to give away control of my my need to be self-sufficient, and let others care for me and be gracious to me. Teach me when to accept gifts of love, and when to give them. May I learn to wash feet and have my feet washed by others - for such mutual love defines following Jesus Christ. Amen.

SS. MARCH 29

JOHN 18:1-19:42

In these two chapters of Scripture, it would seem that everyone deserted Jesus. Judas, Peter, the temple priests, any silent disciples watching, Pilate. But Jesus' mother Mary and some of her friends, along with John - stayed until the end. And then, after his death, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two followers of Jesus who never really made a public statement, are present for Jesus to care for his dead body. Life is filled with many acquaintances, but life is blessed when God gives us a handful of people who are with us even to the bitter end, and beyond.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, thank you for those persons whom you have put into my life who would go the distance with me, even though death. May I be that kind of friend to others - a true friend and unafraid of anything life or death throws at me. Amen.

89. MARCH 30

MATTHEW 27:57-66

Rumors had begun to spread about a plot to steal the body of Jesus, so Pilate chose to make sure no one was able to take Jesus' body from the tomb. He sent soldiers, but he also sent the royal seal to be placed on the tomb - the highest power of the land declared this tomb would be intact. But Pilate had no idea what power he was dealing with. There was a power greater than any Kingdom on this earth and would rip the stone away - perfectly unconcerned about Pilate's opinion. That same power is at work in us and no power on earth can stop the miracle or resurrection that God is doing in our lives, nothing.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, thank you for raising me to new life. Thank you for ignoring the powers in my world - friends, family, my own self-perception, and working your power resurrecting me from a life of sin and death to a life of unknown glory in you. May I never fear the seal of earthly powers that tell me I am powerless to change - you can do anything, even in me. Amen.

90. MARCH 31

JOHN 20:1-18

As you prepare for worship, **pray:** Almighty God, I come before you with gratitude and thanksgiving. Open my heart and mind today, so that as the scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, I may be receptive to your message for me. Amen.

Reflections:

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document provides a detailed explanation of how to categorize these transactions correctly, ensuring they are recorded in the appropriate accounts.

The second part of the document focuses on the process of reconciling the accounts. It explains how to compare the company's records with the bank statements to identify any discrepancies. This process is crucial for detecting errors, such as double entries or omissions, and for ensuring that the company's books are in balance. The document provides a step-by-step guide to performing a reconciliation, including how to investigate and resolve any differences.

The third part of the document discusses the preparation of financial statements. It outlines the requirements for these statements, including the balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement. The document provides a detailed explanation of how to calculate each of these statements, ensuring that they are accurate and complete. It also discusses the importance of presenting these statements in a clear and concise manner, using appropriate accounting conventions and standards.

The fourth part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document provides a detailed explanation of how to categorize these transactions correctly, ensuring they are recorded in the appropriate accounts.

The fifth part of the document focuses on the process of reconciling the accounts. It explains how to compare the company's records with the bank statements to identify any discrepancies. This process is crucial for detecting errors, such as double entries or omissions, and for ensuring that the company's books are in balance. The document provides a step-by-step guide to performing a reconciliation, including how to investigate and resolve any differences.

The sixth part of the document discusses the preparation of financial statements. It outlines the requirements for these statements, including the balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement. The document provides a detailed explanation of how to calculate each of these statements, ensuring that they are accurate and complete. It also discusses the importance of presenting these statements in a clear and concise manner, using appropriate accounting conventions and standards.