

WALKING WITH *Jesus*

**APRIL - JUNE 2024
DAILY DEVOTIONAL**

92. MONDAY,
APRIL 1

LUKE 24:1-12

As Luke tells us that Resurrection story, we see two angels confirm to the women that Jesus had risen from the dead. However, when they tell the 11 disciples, they didn't immediately believe the story because they thought it was an "idle tale". Sometimes, things seem too good to be true – even the things of God. Do you ever struggle to accept that God loves you? That God can forgive you? That God can you use to build His kingdom?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, I believe that you can do the impossible, and that you can change the world. Please help my unbelief that you can do those things in my life and through my life. Amen.

93. TUESDAY, APRIL 2

LUKE 24:13-49

It is interesting that the 2 disciples on the Road to Emmaus recognize Jesus when he breaks the bread, and that the other disciples believe he is risen when he eats fish in their presence. If we look for him – in the simplest things – we can see Jesus. Where have you seen Jesus in the dalliness of life? What keeps you from seeing him in something or someone?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, I know that you are always with me. Please open my eyes to look for and to recognize you in the big and little things of life. Amen.

94. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

LUKE 22:52-71

When Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested, Peter followed Jesus to the place of his first trial. That took courage. However, when people asked him if he was a disciple of Jesus, he denied it 3 different times. Have you ever downplayed your being a disciple because you wanted to fit in? Have you ever denied or changed your standards because you felt it was easier or safer?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, please forgive me those times when I have denied you – either by my words or by my actions. Help me to be bold in my faith so that I can truly live for you. Amen.

95. THURSDAY, APRIL 4

LUKE 23:1-2

When Jesus is tried by Pilate, the Jewish leaders knew the difference between truth and fiction, but they also knew what they wanted Pilate to do. Therefore, they exaggerated and lied and mixed in truth to give it an anchor. Have you ever been guilty of doing the same? Have you taken a kernel of truth and exaggerated a story around it – with the goal of hurting the other person?

Reflections:

Prayer: God of mercy, please forgive me for the times when I have stretched the truth related to someone else. Please forgive me for the times when I have lied to accomplish my goals. Help me to remember You in all my conversations. Amen.

96. FRIDAY, APRIL 5

LUKE 23:24-49

The crucifixion of Jesus is overwhelming. To read about the abuse he suffered, the pain, and the disrespect always cause us to pause – because we know he endured it all for us. You are unconditionally loved by God. How do you share His love with others? Jesus has shown us what it means to sacrifice for others. How often do you put others first? What would it look like for you to have an “other focus” in your life?

Reflections:

Prayer: God it is overwhelming that you love me so much that you sent your Son to die for me. Help me to learn to love others. It is overwhelming that your Son put me first. Help me to learn to focus on others in my life and in your world. Amen.

97. SATURDAY,
APRIL 6

LUKE 23:50-24:12

Both Joseph of Arimathea and the women were willing to make sacrifices on behalf of Jesus. Joseph was willing to give up the tomb he had built for his family, and the women were willing to combine their resources with the plan to honor Jesus by preparing his body. Have you ever made a sacrifice for Jesus? Have you ever put Jesus first regardless of the cost? How would it change your life if he was the first priority?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, please help me to put Jesus first in my life. Help me to be willing to sacrifice and do anything and everything so that my life will always reflect the importance of my discipleship. Amen.

98. SUNDAY,
APRIL 7

JOHN 20:19-31

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:

99. MONDAY,
APRIL 8

MATTHEW 4:8-25

When Jesus called his first disciples, he invited them to follow him, and he gave them the promise that he would make them “fishers of people”. When they followed him, it changed the rest of their lives and has rippled through time even to now. When was the last time you invited someone to come and follow Jesus? Who do you know that you could invite to church, Sunday School, or a small group? It could have a ripple effect for generations to come.

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you called the original disciples and you have called me. Help me to love my friends, family, and neighbors enough to invite them to come and follow you too. Amen.

100. TUESDAY, APRIL 9

MATTHEW 5:1-16

The Beatitudes give us a wonderful look at what it means to be a disciple. And Jesus says that our faithfulness as disciples should make us different from the world around us. He says that we should be salt that adds to the flavor of the world, and that we should shine light into the darkness of the world around us. Where do you enhance your world with your faith? Where do you shine the light of Christ into the lives of others?

Reflections:

Prayer:

Dear God, I know that there are needs around me, lives and situations that are struggling. Help me to mix into those situations in ways that improve and help and reflect you. Amen.

101. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

MATTHEW 6:1-17

The type of prayer that Jesus describes is very personal. The idea of going into our “closet” to pray means that we should be willing to talk to God with open hearts. Sharing all that we face and all that need. How often do you spend time in prayer? When you pray – do you share your heart, or do you speak politely? How can you open your heart to God? It often happens as the habit of prayer develops.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you. To lay my heart before you. To laugh. To cry. To vent. To ask. Help me develop a habit of prayer that will allow me to draw closer and closer to you. Amen.

102. THURSDAY, APRIL 11

MATTHEW 6:18-34

One of the hardest things to learn is how little our worrying changes things in our lives. We can know it in our heart, but we struggle to know it in our head. How much time could you have back if you placed your thoughts and worries in God's hands and reminded yourself that "worrying doesn't work"? How much joy is robbed from your life through worrying? God is big enough to carry your worries and is capable to help you tackle all you face.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, you know my thoughts, so you know my worries. Help me to give my worries to you so that you can help me realize that worrying helps nothing. Amen.

103. FRIDAY,
APRIL 12

MATTHEW 8:1-13

The story of the Centurion (a Roman soldier) is a tremendous example of faith. He knows that Jesus has the power to do the impossible, and we trust Jesus to accomplish the amazing. Where in your life do you need to call on Jesus to help? And where do you need Jesus to do the impossible and the amazing?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, you are awesome. You can do more than I can imagine. You make the impossible look easy. Help me trust you to help me. Amen.

104. SATURDAY, APRIL 13

2 TIMOTHY 2:2

What we learn about God, what helps us grow as disciples of Jesus, is not simply for our benefit – we are called to share. How often do you share with others what you have learned about God, faith, church, etc? How often do you step up to lead or teach in small groups or Sunday school?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, please open the door for me to share my faith. Help me recognize that I have been blessed to be a blessing. Please show me where to share and give me the courage to do so. Amen.

105. SUNDAY, APRIL 14

MATTHEW 22:36-40

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:

106. MONDAY, APRIL 15

MATTHEW 8:14-22

People are often shocked by Jesus' reply to the man who says he will follow anywhere Jesus led. What Jesus is trying to stress is that there are always reasons and excuses to NOT follow. We can put it off, we can delay, we can come up with our busyness and our other plans and wants and needs. But we miss out on following Jesus. Where do you give Jesus reasons or excuses? Where are you missing out on following Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, help me to stop making excuses or working to come up with reasons that delay or prevent me from following you. Help me put you first and learn to say "yes" rather than "later" or "maybe". Amen.

107. TUESDAY,
APRIL 16

MATTHEW 8:23-34

The Sea of Galilee frequently experiences sudden and strong storms. The storm scares the disciples, but when they call on Jesus – He helps. In our life – we often face sudden and strong storms. They can catch us off guard. The good news is we are not alone in the storm. What storm are you facing in your life, and have you asked Jesus to help?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, as the song says, “When the storms of life are raging – stand by me.” You know the storms I am facing, please help me. Please calm the wind and the waves. Amen.

108. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

MATTHEW 9:1-17

One of the most beautiful moments in scripture is when a group of people carried their friend to Jesus. They knew their friend was in need, and they knew that spending time with Jesus would make a difference. Do you have friends who are struggling? Maybe they talk to you at work or call you or text you to discuss their problems, their struggles, their issues? Who are they? Have you invited them to church? Have you brought them to spend time with Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, I know that you are able to help, to offer hope, to inspire, to challenge, and to call. Help me to remember that you are the greatest resource I have and help me have the courage to bring my friends to you whenever they are in need. Amen.

109. THURSDAY,
APRIL 18

MATTHEW 9:18-34

When the woman pushes through the crowd to get to Jesus – she risks everything because she has a great need, and she knows that Jesus can help. She truly believed that all she had to do was to touch the hem of his clothing and she would be well. Do you trust that Jesus loves you enough that he wants to help you? For what do you need to seek his help? Whatever it is – you can reach out to him.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, help me to grow in my faith to know that I can go to Jesus with anything and everything I am facing in my life. I know he cares. Help me to trust him. Amen.

110. FRIDAY, APRIL 19

MATTHEW 9:35-10:15

The idea that the “harvest is great, but the laborers are few” is a reminder to all of us that we all have a role to play in sharing the message of Jesus. He started out with 12 disciples, and now he has you. You have a message to share and an invitation to offer because there are people all around us who need to meet or renew their relationship with Jesus. How can you be a laborer for Christ and share his message and invitation today?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, I know that there are people in my life who need to know you, help me to realize that it is my purpose to share your message with them. Please give me the courage to serve you in this special way. Amen.

111. SATURDAY,
APRIL 20

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

Walking in love isn't the easiest thing. We live in a world that is divided. We often find on social media that everyone wants to pick fights and find fault. And we are called to walk in love. How can you show love to others in how you act and react? How can you not escalate the divisiveness and, instead, you are the voice of hope and love?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, you have shown great love to me and to our world. Help me to be an instrument of your love. Amen.

112. SUNDAY, APRIL 21

LUKE 10:9, LUKE 17:20-21, MATTHEW 6:33

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:

113. MONDAY, APRIL 22

MATTHEW 10:16-33

It is a beautiful thing to think about how much God loves you. God knows the number of hairs on your head. God loves you more than the things and even the other creatures of the world. What would it change in your life if you accepted how much God truly loves and cherishes you? How would it change your relationships if you accepted how much God truly loves and cherishes the other person as well?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, thank you for showering me with your love. Thank you for loving me enough to send your son for me. Thank you for loving me enough to make me in your image. Help me to learn to love others in your name. Amen.

114. TUESDAY,
APRIL 23

MATTHEW 10:34-42

It is hard to read that we are supposed to love Jesus more than other people. We often see Jesus as a supplement to our life, but he wants to be the central figure. How can you put Jesus first? Do you ever diminish the expression of your faith when you are with certain people? Do you ever allow others to take precedence over Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, help me to put you first in my life. It is easy to be distracted by people and things, but please help me put those in their proper place so that you can be central to who I am. Amen.

115. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24

GALATIANS 5:24-25

As we walk with Christ, our hope is that we will continue to change and grow. That as we follow Jesus, we will start to do the things that please him, and not do the things that disappoint him. What are the things in your life – the habits, attitudes, etc – that you need to change in order to walk more closely with Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer:

God, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit. Help me to follow the Spirit's guidance so that I can change into the person that you have called me to be. Amen.

116. THURSDAY, APRIL 25

MATTHEW 11:1-15

Jesus knew that John was always strong in his faith and put God first in all things. So, when he remembered John, that is what stood out. How do others remember you? Do they remember your faith, your faithfulness, your love of God? Or do they remember other (less eternal) attributes?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, help me to put you first, and help me to learn to walk with you each day. Help my life reflect you in such an amazing way that my faith makes a lasting impact. Amen.

117. FRIDAY, APRIL 26

MATTHEW 11:16-30

Why do we set our criteria and then change it when its met? Playing a game that can never be won? I will get more involved in the church (or my faith or serving) when the kids are older...but then we are busy...we will do it when they graduate, or get a job, or when they marry, or when we retire, or when we are feeling better. What is stopping me from saying “today is the day”?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, help me to say that today is the day when I will follow you, when I will serve you, when I will fully give my life to you. Amen.

118. SATURDAY,
APRIL 27

MATTHEW 12:1-14

Walking with Jesus is about a relationship with Jesus. Too often in our lives we are religious, but it doesn't come from the depth of our relationship with Jesus. Jesus wants to be in a day in and day out relationship. Jesus wants to be in all the ups and downs of our life. We aren't called to just go through the motions; we are called to walk with Jesus. How can you stop going through the motions of religion and start a daily walk with Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, help me to stop playing the game and going through the motions. Help me to live each day in relationship with you so that all that I do is for your glory. Amen.

119. SUNDAY, APRIL 28

MATTHEW 7:24-27

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:

120. MONDAY, APRIL 29

MATTHEW 12:15-32

Jesus is stronger than anything that we face. He can handle any problem we bring to him. He can listen to our griping and our complaining, and he wants to help us live our lives to the fullest. How can you trust that Jesus is stronger, and trust him enough that you will let him into the “stuff” of your life?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, I thank you that you want to be in my life. Help me to trust you enough to unload my burdens, to ask for help, and to seek forgiveness. Amen.

121. TUESDAY, APRIL 30

2 TIMOTHY 2:20-21

Paul uses the analogy of specialized kitchen serving utensils to describe the various, unique gifts that God has given to every follower of Jesus. But the passage also lists immaturities and sinful ways that soil “utensils,” making them unable to be used for their purpose. It is a reminder to us that the calling of Christ is to a life of holiness and that affects how we live. What are parts of your life that you need to let God help you “clean up” as you pursue your path in following Christ?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, work in me in ways that I cannot imagine so that I can be used by us in ways that I cannot imagine. Amen.

122. WEDNESDAY,
MAY 1

MATTHEW 12:32-50

Matthew has Jesus saying some hard things. A tree is known by its fruit. End of story. Our fruit encompasses the entirety of how we live - how we treat (when no one is looking) our spouse, children, parents, co-workers, employees, those in poverty, those who struggle with physical or mental health, the driver in the car behind us... the list goes on. Becoming a person who lives out God's grace to everyone, truly everyone, requires us to submit the core of our lives and personality to God. But the end reward is a life of peace for us and everyone we encounter.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, keep me calm to be able to treat everyone I meet with your grace so that I may be known by my fruit. Amen.

123. THURSDAY,
MAY 2

MATTHEW 13:1-17

Jesus said that parables are used to, essentially, sneak in a message of truth to those whose hearts are not open to the “secrets of the Kingdom.” Jesus goes on to praise the disciples for being open to the Kingdom concepts. Scripture contains what it means to be in God’s Kingdom. May we set aside our prejudices so we can hear Jesus say, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.”

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may we seek first your Kingdom with all our lives so that we may know, and live lives blessed by the “secrets of the Kingdom” - which aren’t all that secret for those who seek God. Amen.

124. FRIDAY,
MAY 3

MATTHEW 13:18-35

Matthew 13 is all about parables - why Jesus used them, and then an assortment of these “sneaky containers of the secrets of the Kingdom.” Two that Jesus mentions have a similar meaning - mustard and yeast. Both essentially describe the nature of God’s Kingdom - it starts small but in the right conditions grows exponentially. God is doing great things in our world, in spite of messages to the contrary. They may seem small, but if we jump in on one of these small but mushrooming places that God’s Spirit is at work, great is our joy. Look for that small place - that ministry, that small group, that situation where small but consistent growth and miracles are happening - for there God’s Kingdom is happening.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, in a world filled with seemingly bad news, may we tune out the noise and see where the mustard seeds are growing and where the yeast is rising - and place our energies and resources there. Amen.

125. SATURDAY,
MAY 4

1 JOHN 3:2-3

The process of discovering who we are as a human being is a long journey. Starting in middle school, through high school, college, and the road of adulthood, we often try new personas, seek new friends, and experiment with new beliefs to help better whittle away what we are not and discover who we really are. But as followers of Jesus, who we really are is more determined by who Jesus is. John tells us, "...we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure." Ultimately, we are defined by God, we do not define ourselves. And this frees us from a lifetime of trying to be uniquely me - the true me starts with who God is.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may we seek not so much to define ourselves, but to be defined by you. May we find joy in losing our own identify and becoming one with you - our creator and Lord. Amen.

126. SUNDAY, MAY 5

MATTHEW 5:21-24

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:

127. MONDAY,
MAY 6

MATTHEW 13:36-58

Jesus includes two parables about two people in a similar situation: each found a treasure (one in a field and one in a pearl) and upon recognizing their value, sold everything they had to acquire that treasure. Both treasures are “code” for God’s Kingdom - the reign of God in our lives. When we discover the joy of losing ourselves in what God is doing in our world, all earthly possessions become irrelevant. For pastors in ministry, it is always refreshing (but not surprising) to find these people. They live good but modest lives but have discovered that having flashy possessions does not compare to investing in God’s work. What God is doing is of eternal significance - much better to invest there than in stuff that rusts and goes out of style.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, guide me to the fields and pearls of greatest value so that I too can quit investing my time, energies, and wealth in things that bring no eternal joy. Amen.

128. TUESDAY,
MAY 7

MATTHEW 14:1-21

John the Baptist was Jesus' distant relative, born a few months prior to his own birth. It is hard to know how much time they spent together growing up, but it is not out of the question to believe they romped through the countryside just being boys and growing into manhood. But their lives had been set aside by God even before birth. When the ruler Herod killed John the Baptist, Matthew tells us that Jesus, "...withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself." Though the crowds found his deserted place and ended his time to be by himself, it is a reminder of the human aspect of Jesus. He mourned, and when Lazarus died, he cried. Prayerfully, most days we are ready to engage God's world. But Jesus shows us that there are some days when being alone and away from the noise is God's purpose for us.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may we give ourselves permission to step away from the busyness of life and give ourselves space to be human - to mourn, recover, or just be with you - without the guilt of not running endlessly as our culture often does. Amen.

129. WEDNESDAY,
MAY 8

MATTHEW 14:22-36

After Jesus fed the 5,000, he went on a mountainside to pray and sent the disciples across the sea of Galilee by boat. Jesus walked on the water and caught up with them. When they saw him, they thought he was a ghost with all the typical ghost story reactions. Jesus' response is a bit coded. He said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." "It is I" in Greek is, "ego (I) eimi (am) - which is also code in the New Testament for "Yahweh" the name of God (the name God revealed - or did not reveal because of the meaning - to Moses). What an incredibly calming and encouraging thing to hear. The next time the "ghosts" of life seem to be lurking, may you hear Jesus' words, "Cheer up! Don't be terrified! It is me, the Son of Yahweh, and I am here." No power on earth can overwhelm that truth.

Reflections:

Prayer: When life seems filled with ghosts and darkness, may we hear in the midst of our fear your voice - calming us by reminding us that you are with us and we are never alone. Amen.

130. THURSDAY,
MAY 9

ACTS 5:42

The Roman authorities in Jerusalem had no idea what to do with the followers of, the-assumed-to-be-dead, Jesus of Nazareth. But they said he was not dead. And they taught, preached, and proclaimed this view of reality in Jerusalem, causing a constant anxiety amongst the natives. So, they flogged them and beat them, but Luke tells us they just could not quit. When one experiences the reality of the resurrection, deep in one's soul, it is hard to keep quiet. The good news just bubbles out. And the Book of Acts indicates that this is a good thing, that changed the world.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may I experience or re-experience the reality of your resurrection in such a way that your joy bubbles into all that I do. Even if it makes others uncomfortable, may their discomfort cause them to be intrigued and your Kingdom grow just as Luke recorded in Acts. Amen.

131. FRIDAY,
MAY 10

MATTHEW 15:1-20

To say that Jesus had an adversarial relationship with the Pharisees would be a significant understatement. They were the leaders of the Jewish religion who were focusing on the minors and missing the most important things. In this passage, they were upset that Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands before eating. Admittedly, not the best practice. But their concern was not health, but the breaking of a religious law. Jesus countered that it was not what goes into a person's mouth (even if somewhat "germified" that defined their moral turpitude), but what comes out of their heart (evil intentions, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander) that should concern us. Sometimes we are also guilty, obsessing about a person's wardrobe, hair styles, body art, etc. rather than recognizing what comes from their heart.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, may we not judge and obsess over the small things that do not matter in the lives of others, but instead may we celebrate the good things that they bring into our world. Amen.

132. SATURDAY,
MAY 11

MATTHEW 15:21-39

In this remarkable series of moments in Jesus's ministry, we read stories we are familiar with (the feeding of the multitudes), moments we remember as we've grown in our faith (Jesus curing many people), and moments that perhaps perplex us in Jesus' reaction. Jesus is approached by a woman begging him to heal her daughter. He replies with words that seem harsh. But the result is the same as it is in these other moments- the faith of those present make miracles happen. Jesus recognizes the clear presence of faith in each of these moments and he responds with incredible moments of grace and healing.

Reflections:

Prayer: O Christ of miracles- look to me on this day. Look at my heart and mind and remind me of the faith I have for you, even the size of a mustard seed. In that faith, you are overwhelmingly present in my life, and I am forever grateful for the healing you have performed in my life. Amen.

133. SUNDAY, MAY 12

JOHN 21:1-17

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:

134. MONDAY,
MAY 13

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

What an absolute blessing! As a follower of Christ, as someone who is “in Christ”, we are made new! We are a new creation! Everything old is passed away. Thank you! In our newness we are healed. In our newness, our sins are forgiven. In our newness, we are a clean slate with an ability to share our newness with all those who seek to be made new, too! Can you feel the weight of your past lifted off of your shoulders? Can you breathe deeper than before? Are you free from guilt and anxiety over past mistakes? We are new. We are free. The old is passed away.

Reflections:

Prayer: God of new creations, I praise you today in the reminder that I am a new creation because of your grace and mercy. As I breathe deeply, I am filled with your newness of my life. I am made brand new. I am free, and all I can do is praise your name for this freedom. Amen.

135. TUESDAY,
MAY 14

MATTHEW 16:1-20

Jesus warns us of the teachings of the Sadducees and the Pharisees in this passage as he reminds his disciples of all of the miracles he has just completed in feeding the multitudes in the previous passages. These brief moments of clarity for the Disciples add to their endearing presence—even when they are in the presence of Jesus, and personally witness all that he does, day in and day out, they still sometimes do not “get it!” “Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand....?” But as the Disciples continue to grasp the reality of who Jesus is, it is Peter who, when given the opportunity, declares with absolute authority that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of Man, and it is in that moment that Jesus declares that Peter is the ROCK upon which He will build his church. Truly, a remarkable moment as we hear the declaration of his most trusted disciple as to who Jesus is. These moments serve as a reminder that, even when we sometimes miss what God is doing in us, there also are moments of absolute clarity.

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, Messiah, Son of the Living God- you grace us with moments of absolute clarity in which we see you in all of your glory. My prayer today is to allow the busyness of my life to no longer block out those moments of experiencing you in your glory, acknowledging who you are with the boldness of Peter. Amen.

136. WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

MATTHEW 16:21-17:8

Fresh off of Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus begins to share the information they need to know—that he is needing to go to Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecy, including the suffering and death on a cross. Peter tries to stop him from talking in such a way, believing, that as the Messiah, he could do away with the suffering and death. Jesus harshly rebukes Peter and compels his disciples to “take up a cross of their own and follow”. In his brief speech to his disciples, it becomes clear that our lives as we know them must be surrendered if we are to be a faithful follower of Jesus. We must be willing to part ways with our old self and be willing to surrender our life for the reality of a new life in His kingdom. And in these same moments, only six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to the mountain where they witness the transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of Moses and Elijah. It is on this mountaintop that the words heard forever cement the understanding of who Jesus is. “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased, listen to Him”. Imagine the fear, the thrill, the overwhelming reality of having spent these years in the presence of God Incarnate! There is no going back for these disciples!

Reflections:

Prayer: Beloved, with whom God is well pleased, hear our prayer this day. As we seek to be in your presence, remind us of the need to surrender our entire self to you, allowing for a willingness to take up your cross daily, as a true follower of you. Grant us those moments of hearing God's voice affirming who we are in you. Amen.

137. THURSDAY,
MAY 16

MATTHEW 17:8-27

As Jesus and his disciples return from the Transfiguration, they are met by a father of a sick boy. The father explains to Jesus that his son needs healing, and the disciples had tried to heal him, but were unable. After instructing the father to bring him the boy to be healed, he speaks to the disciples about their lack of faith. The idea that faith the size of a mustard seed has the ability to move mountains is one that has remained as an image throughout history. We are constantly reminded that even the smallest amount of faith in Jesus has the ability to change the world. These moments by Jesus serve as reminders to the disciples (and to us) that, while we may not understand a circumstance at the time, our faith in Jesus provides us the strength to overcome any seemingly insurmountable obstacle.

Reflections:

Prayer: O Master, you model for us an unwavering faith. You promise us our faith, even when shrouded in doubt, is enough. You encourage us, that through confidence in our faith, the world can be changed through you. Grant us the patience to feel your spirit and presence today as we, perhaps, question “why?” to an area of our life. Amen.

138. FRIDAY,
MAY 17

1 PETER 2:24

“By his wounds you have been healed” speaks to the absolute truth in the death on the cross for Jesus. The reality of Jesus being fully human reminds us that at no other point in history had God become human, and in doing so, God assumes all of the characteristics humans share, but especially the ability to experience pain and suffering. But Peter reminds us in this passage that Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross was not merely to experience the human suffering, but to assume the suffering for all humans who believe in him, by taking on the weight of our sin in his suffering and wounds on the cross. And it is in the healing that he provides us with eternity. His assumption of our sin allows us to be fully healed of the wounds those sins would burden us with. But his suffering and death frees us from the wounds of sin.

Reflections:

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, our words fail to fully express the gratitude we have for you in your willingness to suffer and die on a cross for our sins. While it is difficult to comprehend at times, our gratefulness does not waver in you. We are healed. We are free. Amen.

139. SATURDAY,
MAY 18

MATTHEW 18:1-14

These familiar words speak to the love and compassion of Jesus in two beautiful ways. When asked “who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”, Jesus replies by placing a child in the midst of the disciples. The innocence and trust of a child is the model for our faith. We are not called Children of God by accident! And we are warned- do not interfere with the spiritual growth and faith of a child, for it will not end well! Jesus models for us the earnestness of God in wanting each child of His to be in His presence. The joy found in the shepherd when one lost sheep is found is the reality of God when one of His children is found. We are found. And God leaps for joy in that truth.

Reflections:

Prayer: O Great Shepherd, I was lost and now I am found. I am claimed as a Child of God and I am forever grateful to be in your presence. Remind me of my childlike innocence and faith. Nudge me into the mind of a child celebrating the simplicity of faith in you. You are God who has chosen me. It can be that simple. Amen.

140. SUNDAY, MAY 19

JOHN 8:1-11

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:

141. MONDAY,
MAY 20

MATTHEW 18:15-22

“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” These words of Jesus come on the heels of Jesus teaching on how sin can be addressed when we are aware of it in others. Accountability to one another is critical, and Jesus is imploring us to confess our sin before we become overburdened by it. By confession, by loosening the grip that sin can have, we are freed from that sin both on earth and in heaven. Freeing ourselves of the bondage of sin by sharing in confession, we are promised an eternity in God’s presence. And Jesus goes on to answer Peter when Peter questions Jesus about how often we must forgive those who confess to us their sin. Seven times? No, seventy times seven. Our ability to forgive is as infinite as Jesus’, for he shows us the length to which He will go to forgive us of our sins.

Reflections:

Prayer: Forgive me, Jesus. Forgive me of the sins I share and forgive me for my unwillingness to share all of my sins with you. You know our hearts. You simply call us to confess to you all that separate us from you. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Thank you, Jesus, for your unwavering forgiveness. Amen.

142. TUESDAY,
MAY 21

MATTHEW 18:23-35

Matthew shares with us an analogy of how Jesus wants us to see the Kingdom of Heaven and the importance of forgiveness to each other. He speaks in terms we can all understand- a King graciously forgives the debt of one of his servants, yet the servant then refuses to forgive a debt owed to him by another servant. We are called to forgive others as we have been forgiven. Our inability to forgive flies in the face of the forgiveness we have been given. Forgiveness does not mean we need to forget. We are given memory as a gift and a tool. We are able to be reminded of joyous times in our lives and also reminded of times when we have been hurt. Our memory allows us to proceed with caution in the future. Our willingness to forgive does not require us to forget, but to clean the slate of wrong just as ours has been cleaned.

Reflections:

Prayer: God, while I am forever grateful for the forgiveness of my sins, it can be difficult to forgive those around me. Remind me of your calling to me. Remind me of the freedom that comes with being forgiven, and the freedom that comes in forgiving. Amen.

143. WEDNESDAY,
MAY 22

PSALM 27

“The Lord is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear?” David’s Psalm shares with us the beauty found in the salvation of God’s love. God is our protector. God is our fortress. God raises us up over all that may harm us and comforts us. The truth found in Psalm 27 speaks to the earnestness of wanting to forever live in God’s house. And this love and comfort and protection that comes from being in God’s presence is not a wish or a dream- it is our reality. We are invited into the exact type of relationship with God that David casts for us in Psalm 27. Meditate on the words of the Psalm. Find a phrase within the psalm that speaks to your relationship with God. Repeat that phrase as part of your everyday. For me, “The Lord is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear?” seems to run in repeat in my head throughout my day. Fear is replaced with comfort. Darkness replaced by light. Death replaced by salvation. David’s Psalms have a way of speaking to us deeply even now. Allow the words to become part of your daily interaction with God.

Reflections:

Prayer: You are my light and my salvation. I have no fear because of the comfort you provide me. You have no other reason to give this to me other than you love me more than anyone or anything can love. Thank you, O God, for your words of comfort and peace. Amen.

144. THURSDAY,
MAY 23

MATTHEW 19:1-15

Jesus said, “what God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” We hear these words of Jesus at weddings, and we witness the miracle of the two becoming one in God’s eyes. God’s will for marriage is to live in love and commitment to each other and Him. Jesus holds up children as an example of purity and innocence. Do we approach our commitments with purity and child-like trust? Do we seek to follow God’s perfect plan or our perfect plan?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, your plan is perfect, and I trust you to guide me in all of my decisions. Help me to seek your purpose for my life and be committed to furthering your Kingdom in all that I do. Amen.

145. FRIDAY,
MAY 24

MATTHEW 19:16-30

We all know the pressure of economic responsibility. We are called to be good stewards of our time, talents, and resources, understanding they are all gifts from God. God's greatest desire is that we rely on Him to meet our needs. When we pursue material possessions and monetary treasures more than God, we miss the joy of an intimate relationship with our Savior. When you look at your calendar, your finances, and your resources, what threatens to take precedence in your life? Who do you serve?

Reflections:

Prayer: Father, help us to become one with You. Keep us from placing our devotion on earthly possessions rather than eternal treasures. Let nothing come between our love for You and Your children. Amen.

146. SATURDAY,
MAY 25

MATTHEW 20:1-16

Early in life, we are taught that life isn't always fair. We demand things to be even and just- unless we are the ones with more than our fair share. This parable highlights this conclusion. Fairness is not the issue at all. God's favor is freely and generously given to those who ask. In reality, no one deserves forgiveness or eternal life. Yet it is by his transformative grace that we are saved. Are you humbled by God's extravagant gift of salvation? Do you live your life with the same generosity Jesus taught?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your gracious, life-changing grace. Remind me often that I don't have to earn your love or win your favor. I come to you just as I am. Amen.

147. SUNDAY,
MAY 26

MATTHEW 7:1-5

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:

148. MONDAY,
MAY 27

MATTHEW 20:17-34

We live in a very competitive society. Our temptation is to have more, be more, and seek the “honored seats.” Such was the case with James and John. But Jesus flips the script and teaches us the order of Kingdom living; “even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.” The greatest person in God’s kingdom is the one that humbly serves. Is that how we live our lives? How is this truth the antithesis of what our culture broadcasts?

Reflections:

Prayer: Our minds are unlike yours, Father. We think we must compete and outperform one another to be considered for acceptance in your Kingdom. Help us remember the fruits of the Holy Spirit, remembering that kindness, goodness, and gentleness are the characteristics you value. Thank you that there is no competition in a Christ-centered life. Amen.

149. TUESDAY,
MAY 28

EPHESIANS 4:22-24

Renewal begins in our mind. As our thoughts go, our heart and behavior follow. Jesus calls us to be changed by the love, grace, and redemption He has freely given us. This gift cost Jesus his life. Do we live as renewed and redeemed believers?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for the example of your life. Thank you for the sacrifice of your death. Let my life reflect more of you and less of me. Amen.

150. WEDNESDAY,
MAY 29

MATTHEW 21: 1-13

When Jesus entered, Jerusalem, the people cried out, “Hosanna! Son of David!” They believed he was the king and conqueror that would restore their power and kingdom. But Jesus came as a servant and separated the religious from the truly righteous people. Days later, their shouts of praise would turn to cries for Jesus’ crucifixion. Are we guilty of the same attitude, to praise God one day and push Him away the next?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, help me walk with you humbly, serve you sacrificially, and love you, with more of my heart, every step of the way! Amen.

151. THURSDAY,
MAY 30

MATTHEW 21:14-32

Fig trees were a source of plentiful and affordable food in Israel. In late spring and early autumn, fig trees yielded their fruit. Jesus cursed the tree that was bountiful in foliage, but barren in fruit. Jesus' harsh words can be used as a metaphor. The Jewish nation looked fruitful in appearance but was spiritually barren. Barren trees like barren people cannot be used to accomplish God's purposes. We are created by God to bear fruit and use our gifts and resources to further God's kingdom.

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, you don't look at our outward appearance, but the condition of our heart. Strengthen my faith that I may be a faithful and fruitful servant. Lord Jesus, show me where I am needed to fulfill your purposes and let me be considered worthy to work in your Kingdom. Amen.

152. FRIDAY,
MAY 31

MATTHEW 21:33-46

In this parable, Jesus uses the example of a vineyard. God is the owner, and the tenants represent the rebellious nation of Israel. The story highlights the countless times God seeks to reveal Himself to us, even sending His only son. We rejected Jesus then; is it possible we reject him now? Do we insist on doing things our way and fail to see the gifts of God's forgiveness and love?

Reflections:

Prayer: Father, forgive me for the times I have tried to control my circumstances and my community. Forgive me for the missed opportunities to see you as the cornerstone of my life. Amen.

153. SATURDAY, JUNE 1

ROMANS 8:28-29

What a comfort to know that every single day God is with us and working for our good! What better mindset than to know that no circumstance, crisis, or calendar event thwarts God's perfect plan! We are His children created to know and love our Creator. We can have confidence that our Father carries our sorrows and turns our tears into renewed joy!

Do you believe that today?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, your loving kindnesses never cease, and your compassions never fail. They are as fresh as the morning and as sure as the sunrise. Great is your faithfulness, and my hope is found in you! Amen.

154. SUNDAY, JUNE 2

MATTHEW 5:38-42

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:

155. MONDAY, JUNE 3

MATTHEW 22:1-14

God invites us to the table and asks us to join Him at His heavenly banquet. He pursues us with a Father's heart, and even clothes us in His righteousness. But God does not mandate the invitation, it is our decision. We must walk through the door of salvation and accept the work that has been done for us. We don't earn a seat at the table, it is freely given. Does our life reflect gratitude and humility? Have we put our relationship on a reservation for another time?

Reflections:

Prayer: Father, sometimes we think we are too busy to accept your invitation. We think we don't need your offer of eternal grace. Open our eyes, Lord! Save us from ourselves! And extend your gracious invitation one more time. Amen.

156. TUESDAY,
JUNE 4

MATTHEW 22:15-33

The Pharisees and Sadducees had a goal of getting Jesus to say something that would incriminate him politically or theologically. Yet, Jesus answers their questions in a way that leaves all of those listening amazed. Jesus is questioned, threatened, and tempted throughout his earthly ministry and never fails. Have you ever felt questioned or tempted in your life? How can we find comfort in the fact that Jesus faced the trials of earth and overcame them?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, you faced many foes and never once failed. Remind me today that because of who you are, I can face tomorrow with confidence in knowing that even when I fail, you have overcome all my shortcomings, and you love me! Amen.

157. WEDNESDAY,
JUNE 5

MATTHEW 22:34-46

Jesus again deals with questioning from the Pharisees. Before leaving them in silence with a question, Jesus encapsulates the entirety of the Law and our calling as followers of Christ by commanding us to love God and love our neighbors. Who are your neighbors at your home, work, and school? How can you individually, and the church collectively, better love God and our neighbors?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, put in me a heart that longs to love you and those around me, even those I disagree with. I want people to see Jesus through how I love them. Amen.

158. THURSDAY,
JUNE 6

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

The Bible is powerful. It draws us into a deeper relationship with God and helps guide and direct our lives. It is meant to be an integral part of our faith journey. How often are you reading the Bible? How can you make Scripture a larger part of your life?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, illuminate my soul through the power of your Word. May my life continue to be transformed through the reading and hearing of Scripture. Amen.

159. FRIDAY,
JUNE 7

MATTHEW 23:1-15

Jesus calls the Pharisees and scribes hypocrites. Why? They do not practice what they preach. We can know everything about the Bible. We can pray well. Yet, if our lives do not reflect Christ in the way we love and treat others, we are missing the point of the Gospel. How can you reflect the Gospel in your life today? How can you avoid being like the Pharisees and scribes?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make me a doer of your Word, not just a hearer. Help me show people Jesus through my love and my actions. In your name, Amen.

160. SATURDAY,
JUNE 8

MATTHEW 23:16-39

The Pharisees are focused on the exterior. Jesus cares about the interior, our hearts. It is a calling upon each of us to remember that God desires our hearts and not simply a new lifestyle. If we take care of the interior, the exterior is also clean! How is your heart today?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, put in us a clean heart. A heart that is fully devoted to you. Make me a humble follower of you oh Lord. Amen.

161. SUNDAY, JUNE 9

MARK 10:35-40, 46-52

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:

162. MONDAY,
JUNE 10

MATTHEW 24:1-14

In this passage, Jesus proclaims to the disciples that the temple would be destroyed within their generation. Ultimately, this occurred in the year 70. His words for the disciples remain true for us today. It is a reality that chaos will inhabit our world. It is hard to watch the news today and not understand that reality. However, we as Christians can endure this chaos, because we know that we belong to Christ. How can you remind yourself daily that you belong to Christ amid chaos?

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us strength to endure the challenges of this life. Give us faith amid our chaos. Bring redemption to our hearts and to this world! Amen.

163. TUESDAY,
JUNE 11

1 CORINTHIANS 13:11

Paul wants the Corinthians to “grow up”. Not simply from an earthly maturity standpoint, but more than that, a spiritual one. It is also a calling for us to continue to grow and mature in our faith as well. How can you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, continue to grow and mature in your faith? Why is it important to do so?

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, draw me closer to you every day. Help me grow in my knowledge of and in my relationship with you. Amen.

164. WEDNESDAY,
JUNE 12

MATTHEW 24:15-31

This chapter in Matthew is frightening to read. Yet, it is important for us to understand the warnings Jesus is giving us. Jesus warns of false teachers during the chaos that is to come for his disciples. That same warning rings true for us. That is why it is crucial for us to focus our heart constantly on Jesus through prayer, reading the Scriptures, and through how we love as we await his return. Are you living your life in expectation of Christ's return?

Reflections:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to stay focused on you. When life is crazy or perhaps even frightening, remind us to take heart in knowing that we are your children. Amen.

165. THURSDAY, JUNE 13

MATTHEW 24:32-51

We believe Christ will return to redeem all creation. However, we do not know when that will be. Jesus instructs us to always be ready, because he will return when we do not expect it. How can we as Christians live our lives in this world while also being ready for Christ's return?

Reflections:

Prayer: Jesus, as I go through my life, help me serve you here on Earth. Guide me through your Holy Spirit to make your name known to the nations. Help me also to look forward with anticipation for your return. Amen.

166. FRIDAY,
JUNE 14

1 PETER 1:15-16

Since we believe in Jesus, we can't go on living however we wish. We are called to be different. We are called to act different. We are called to love different. We are called to be holy. Through how we live our lives, people should see Jesus. How can someone see Jesus in your life today?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, I know I am not perfect. I know I make mistakes and fall short of your glory. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, help me be more like you every day. I want people to see your glory through my life. Amen.

167. SATURDAY,
JUNE 15

MATTHEW 25:1-30

We have two parables in today's reading: the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids and the Parable of the Loaned Money. Jesus told these parables to clarify what it means to be ready for his return and how to live until he does. The five foolish bridesmaids ran out of oil for their lamps and missed the wedding completely. Spiritual preparations cannot be borrowed or bought. Are you spiritually ready for Christ's return? In the second parable, we are shown that we must invest our time, talents, and treasure diligently in order to serve God. How are you serving God? Are you serving God completely or do you hold back?

Reflections:

Prayer: Almighty God, help me to stop playing it safe in my journey of faith. Help me to avoid making excuses when Jesus calls me to do something for the Kingdom. Give me the strength and the wisdom to live a life of true service until Christ returns. Amen.

168. SUNDAY, JUNE 16

MARK 4:35-41

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:

169. MONDAY,
JUNE 17

MATTHEW 26:57-75

In today's scripture, Jesus is taken to Caiaphas' house to be questioned. They can only find two witnesses who are willing to distort Jesus' teachings. But when asked directly if he is the Messiah, Jesus answers yes and seals his fate. Jesus answers yes calmly, courageously, and with determination. What a contrast to Peter in the courtyard who denies Jesus three separate times. Have you ever denied Jesus in ways both small or large as Peter did? Do you believe that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah? If so, how has your life been changed?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me the courage to always stand up for my faith. Help me be a faithful follower who puts you first in my life regardless of the consequences. I pray these things in your most holy name. Amen.

170. TUESDAY,
JUNE 18

MATTHEW 26: 1-16

In this passage, the chief priests and elders are plotting to have Jesus killed. But we also see Mary, sister of Martha, pour very expensive oil on Jesus' head. What an act of gratitude and submission to the Son of Man, the Messiah. Yet Judas protests the waste of such an expensive perfume when it could have been sold and the money given to the poor. How ironic that Judas is ready to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, also an expensive sum of money. Judas is disappointed that Jesus is not the kind of Messiah he expected: one who will overthrow the Romans and restore Israel as a sovereign nation. Have you ever betrayed Jesus because he was the wrong kind of Messiah? Have you ever made an extravagant gesture for Jesus and did not count the cost?

Reflections:

Prayer: Forgive me when I betray you, O Lord, in ways both big and small. Help me to grow in my faith that I too can make an extravagant gesture for Jesus with an open heart like Mary. Amen.

171. WEDNESDAY,
JUNE 19

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

Paul is telling us to do a spiritual evaluation to see if we are really Christian. Just as we receive a physical check-up, Paul urges us to give ourselves a spiritual check-up. Are you seeing a growing awareness of Christ's power and presence in your life? Are you a Christian or merely an impostor going through the motions? How are you taking active steps to grow closer to God?

Reflections:

Prayer: Most Holy God, help me to remember my spiritual health is just as vital as my physical health. Help me to remember if I am not growing closer to you daily, then I am drifting away from you. Help me to be a true Christian in my words, my actions, and in my heart. Amen.

172. THURSDAY, JUNE 20

MATTHEW 26:17-35

We see in today's scripture the last meal the disciples will eat with their master, Jesus. Jesus predicts correctly the two who will betray him: Judas for 30 pieces of silver and Peter who will deny him three times before the rooster crows. The Passover meal was a vivid reminder of how the Angel of Death passed over the houses of the Israelites who were slaves in Egypt because the blood of a lamb marked their doorways. Soon Jesus will be the Passover Lamb to wash away the sins of the world. In light of Jesus' sacrifice, what does the Communion meal mean to you? Do you take it for granted merely going through an empty liturgy? Or is it a powerful reminder that Christ died for your sins and the sins of this world?

Reflections:

Prayer: I thank you O Lord for the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation, which is only available through the love and sacrifice of your Son and my Savior Jesus the Christ. May it never be an empty ritual, but rather a connection binding me to all those who have come before me and all those who will come after me until Christ returns in his final glory. Amen.

173. FRIDAY,
JUNE 21

MATTHEW 26:36-46

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was in anguish over his coming death. All he asked of his inner circle of three disciples was to keep watch over him while he prayed. Yet each time, Jesus found them asleep. Jesus uses Peter's drowsiness to warn him about the kind of temptations he would soon face. "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." What is the most agonizing situation you have ever faced? Would prayer help keep you strong in the faith? What changes do you need to make in your daily schedule to strengthen your prayer life?

Reflections:

Prayer: God, you know me better than I know myself. Keep me awake and alert in the times of tempting in my life. Help me to use prayer to protect myself from temptation. Amen.

174. SATURDAY,
JUNE 22

MATTHEW 26:47-56

Jesus is betrayed by Judas with a kiss and arrested not by Roman soldiers under the law, but by religious leaders. Peter was the disciple who cut off a servant's ear with a sword. Peter was trying to prevent what he saw as a defeat. He did not understand that Jesus had to die to achieve victory. Perhaps that is why all the disciples deserted Jesus and fled. When have you betrayed Jesus? When have you deserted Jesus?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, I often fail on this journey of faith. Give me understanding so that I may accept Jesus as the kind of Messiah you want him to be and then the courage to live as he taught me to live. Help me never to abandon Jesus. Amen.

175. SUNDAY, JUNE 23

JOHN 6:67

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:

176. MONDAY, JUNE 24

PSALM 126:5-6

Today's passage was probably written to celebrate the exiles' return from captivity. It shows God's promise to be with us in the time of tears as well as the times of joy. God's ability to restore life is beyond our understanding. It also reminds us that although God does not cause our tragedies, God can bring good out of any situation. Have you ever experienced God's presence in a time of grief or sorrow? Have you ever seen God's ability to bring something good out of a terrible situation?

Reflections:

Prayer: Gracious God, help me to feel your presence when I walk in the valley of grief and despair. Remind me that you are a God who always keeps the promises, and you will never let me go. Through the power of the Spirit, may I always see how you find good in the most desperate situations. I pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

177. TUESDAY,
JUNE 25

MATTHEW 26:57-75

While Jesus was being unfairly tried, Peter was waiting in the courtyard. Despite his protest that he would never deny Jesus, Peter denies him three separate times. Have you ever denied Jesus in ways both small or large as Peter did? Do you believe that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah? If so, how has your life been changed?

Reflections:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me the courage to always stand up for my faith. Help me be a faithful follower that puts you first in my life regardless of the consequences. I pray these things in your most holy name. Amen.

178. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26

MATTHEW 27:1-14

Jesus is turned over to Pilate since the religious leaders could not impose the death penalty, only a Roman governor could do that. Judas is filled with remorse and returned the 30 pieces of silver, but the religious leaders would not accept “blood money” and used it to purchase a potter’s field as a burial place for unclean foreigners. Judas commits suicide. When asked by Pilate if he was the king of the Jews, Jesus answered yes and puts Pilate into a complex position. Judas’ actions remind us that we cannot undo something even when we wish we could. God forgives our sins, but we do not escape the consequences of those sins. What were some sins you have deeply regretted? What were the consequences of those sins?

Reflections:

Prayer: God of all Mercy, I ask for your forgiveness for the sins I have committed. Give me the strength to resist temptation and live a righteous life. Help me to make amends to those I have hurt by my actions. I asked these things in the name of Christ. Amen.

179. THURSDAY,
JUNE 27

MATTHEW 27:15-31

Focus on the crowd in this passage. After Pilate tries to remove himself from the scene, the crowd boldly assumes responsibility for Jesus' sentence saying, "His blood be on us and on our children!" The crowd meant this as either a boast or a declaration to justify their actions, but God had a different plan. The blood of Christ would be upon the crowd, their children, and all creation—but not as a tool for condemnation. Jesus died for the very ones who longed for his death, and for every man and woman that ever sinned, so that by his blood and sacrifice they could be redeemed—their hands washed clean.

Reflections:

Prayer: God you are good and merciful. So many times, we live in open defiance to you and your plan for our lives. Instead of washing your hands of us and our brokenness, you give us grace, you soften our rebellious hearts, and you give us a new life and a new purpose. Amen.

180. FRIDAY,
JUNE 28

1 PETER 2:1-3

The human brokenness that we witnessed in yesterday's passage serve as an appropriate visual for these things. Peter writes about: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander. When we choose to follow Christ, we choose to be like Him. We decide to be nurtured by His wisdom, shaped by His character, and sustained by His grace. If we do this we're more loving instead of hateful, more truthful instead of deceitful, and more grateful instead of envious. Our old thoughts, patterns, and identities must go so that our hearts make room for a God who is good.

Reflections:

Prayer: God you are good. Anyone who knows you knows that to be true. God, we pray that every day we can have the faith to taste and see that you, your presence, and your way for our lives is good. Amen.

181. SATURDAY, JUNE 29

MATTHEW 27:32-54

A can't-miss moment from this passage is the very real life-giving power of Christ's atoning work. We don't often dwell on verse 52 and 53, but if we believe God's word to be trustworthy and true, then we believe that as Jesus yielded his spirit, tombs were opened up and those who were thought to be long gone walked out of their graves. Simply put, Christ's atoning work made dead people alive. Not symbolically, but for real.

Reflections:

Prayer: Almighty God, you are real. Your life-giving power has done miracles in our world and your Spirit is still moving among us. Help us have faith to believe that you can bring life to dead places. Amen.

182. SUNDAY, JUNE 30

MARK 5:21-43

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:

NOTES

NOTES

