



21 DAYS OF PRAYER



CENTRAL
CHURCH

21 DAYS
OF DEVOTION
AND PRAYER

A Central Easter Devotional

DAY 1

March 27, 2022

MATTHEW 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.

¹⁴ John would have prevented Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Then he consented.¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said,

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

In the baptism of Jesus, we see the emergence of Jesus' public ministry. A ministry filled with miraculous victories and even relatable lows. Here in the waters of the Jordan River, we see a collision that will mark the life and ministry of Jesus. The divine Son of God, identifying with sinful humanity.

In verse 14, John, knowing who Jesus is says to him, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" John understood that the roles seemingly are reversed. Who was he to baptize the holy Son of God? But then Jesus gives this answer, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus did not need to be forgiven of any sin. Nor did He need to be baptized, but it was important for Jesus to fully identify with sinful humanity even though He Himself was sinless.

Immediately, we have a miraculous moment of the heavens opening, the Holy Spirit descending, and the Father declaring, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." In the very moment that Jesus identifies with us in our weaknesses, we are reminded that He is still fully God. One of the greatest miracles of the life of Jesus is that He could experience our frailties while being strong enough to solve them. Hebrews 4:15 puts it this way: "¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin".

PRAYER:

Take some time to thank God for His goodness towards you. If you are struggling, bring it to God in prayer and remember that He can sympathize with you and comfort you in your times of need.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

When Jesus was baptized by John, something miraculous happened. The Heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus with the Father declaring, "This is My beloved Son, whom I am well pleased." At this moment we see that Jesus was not only a man who could identify with our temptation of sin but He was fully God!

Make it Stick

At dinner tonight discuss ways that Jesus can relate to us because He did walk the earth and was fully man. And then discuss the things He did that proved He was fully God.

DAY 2

March 28, 2022

MATTHEW 8:5-13

⁵ When He had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to Him, appealing to Him, ⁶ "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly."⁷ And He said to him, "I will come and heal him."⁸ But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed."⁹ For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who followed Him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Jesus has been about His public ministry for some time now. There was already a reputation that followed Him as a man who could teach and perform mighty signs and wonders. In this story, the reputation of Jesus had reached a Roman Centurion who was in desperate need. His servant was lying paralyzed at home and was greatly ill. As he approaches Jesus, he makes his request known immediately and simply. To which Jesus agrees to go with the man and heal his servant. It is at this moment that the heart of the centurion is revealed. He tells Jesus that he is unworthy to have Jesus in his home and that He does not need to travel with him, but all He needs to do is say the word and his servant will be healed. What exactly gave this man such humility and confidence? To believe that Jesus could heal a man even though He was nowhere near him? It is revealed in this statement: ⁹ "For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." This Centurion understood that Jesus' ability to heal was not a skillset or a gifting He had. This centurion knew that Jesus' healing came from the authority that He had. In other words, his faith was in who Jesus was, and not simply what Jesus could do.

PRAYER:

Pray that God would remind you of who He is. Pray for people you know that do not have a saving knowledge of Christ. Present your requests to God being confident not simply in what Jesus can do, but confident in who Jesus is.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

The centurion knew that Jesus had the authority to just speak something and it would be done. He knew that Jesus did not have to be near them to perform the miracle of healing his servant. From this we can learn that Jesus has the authority and power to do anything. We can call on His name for anything.

Make it Stick

As a family, think of someone who could use Jesus' healing. Spend some time praying together and present your requests to Jesus that He would do God's will concerning this person.

DAY 3

March 29, 2022

MATTHEW 8:23-27

²³ And when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but He was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." ²⁶ And He said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then He rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?"

To this point, this is one of the most remarkable displays of Jesus' miraculous power. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by mountains and is below sea level, making it the lowest freshwater lake in the world in regard to elevation. Because of this interesting landscape, the Sea of Galilee is well known for sudden and violent storms that churn the waters and toss boats to and fro. Caught by surprise, the disciples were understandably terrified. Meanwhile, Jesus was sleeping in the boat. Upon hearing their cries of distress, Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves and "there was a great calm." Astonished, the disciples utter the words that echo true today, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

As we live our lives, there will surely be days where storms arise out of nowhere. The storms of life can be quick and seemingly unrelenting. When these storms hit, it can be very easy for us to forget that we are sitting in a boat with the one that commands the very winds and seas that we are afraid of. As we read this story, we are reminded that God is fully in control. There is no storm that arises that God is unaware of. In addition to this, if God can cause the storms to cease with just the sound of His voice, then we can trust that there is no storm we can encounter that is too big for Him.

PRAYER:

Pray to God and ask Him to give you faith in the midst of life's storms. Thank Him for His control over the winds and the waves and rest assured that He is present with you no matter what the circumstances might seem like.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Think of the last time your family was at the beach. Imagine if suddenly the waves stopped! Think of how Jesus and His power could stop the waves. This is much like what the disciples experienced in the boat with Jesus as He calmed the storm. We have that same power with us every day when we follow Jesus. What "storm" (or hard time) are you going through right now that needs Jesus?

Make it Stick

Reread the story together and make a pretend boat for the kids to sit in. Ask these questions. Should they have been afraid? (*No*) Why not? (*Jesus was with them, and they should have known that He could help them.*) Should we ever be afraid? (*No*) We should never be afraid because we know that Jesus is with us and can help us.

DAY 4

March 30, 2022

LUKE 5:18-26

¹⁸ And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus,¹⁹ but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.²⁰ And when He saw their faith, He said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"²² When Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts?²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."²⁵ And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.²⁶ And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

Here is another familiar miracle of Jesus. As He is teaching in a house, there was a paralyzed man, in desperate need of Jesus. There is much to say about the commitment of the friends and the expectations of the paralyzed man, the point of this story is the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes. Shocked that Jesus claimed to forgive sins, the Pharisees and scribes thought to themselves, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" The Pharisees are often wrong, but here they are correct. Only God can forgive sins.

Notice that the passage says that Jesus "perceived their thoughts". What the Pharisees thought was hidden from Jesus is revealed. Jesus gives an incredibly profound statement, "Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" Anyone can say that sins are forgiven, it is impossible to verify. However, if someone is tells a paralyzed man to get up and walk, it is easily verifiable. He heals the man physically, and everyone in the room is astonished. We see that Jesus healed the man physically to show His authority to heal the man spiritually. Jesus' concern is our spiritual condition before our physical condition. What good would it be if the man could walk but died in his sins? Here we see that God prioritizes what is not seen over what is seen.

PRAYER:

Let's pray that God would help us to prioritize the things that truly matter.
Ask that God would help you see the spiritual needs of others as primary,
and that He would allow opportunities to meet physical needs with the main goal

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Several men brought a paralyzed man to Jesus. They could not get into the house to see him so they carried the man up to the roof and lowered him down into the room. To prove that He had the authority (as God) to forgive sins, Jesus healed the paralyzed man. In this miracle, we learn that Jesus' primary concern is saving us from our sins.

Make it Stick

Draw a picture of today's miracle. Use the picture to retell the story. As a family, think of those who you know that need the miracle of deciding to follow Jesus. Pray for them by name.

DAY 5

March 31, 2022

LUKE 17:11-19

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem He was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as He entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴ When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And He said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

How do you respond to God's faithfulness? In this story, Jesus miraculously heals ten men of their leprosy. Leprosy is a skin condition that is incredibly severe and contagious. Those infected with leprosy lived outside of the city, away from others. It was here that Jesus was met by ten lepers. We later discover that this was a mixed company of Jews and Samaritans. These two groups despised one another, but were bonded together by their shared misery. All differences between these men were set aside as they came together to call out to Jesus.

Jesus commands these men to go present themselves to the priest, and all of them go. Scripture tells us that they were healed "as they went". Amazing to see their obedience and faith here. They didn't wait until the leprosy left them to obey, they went as they were, and they were healed as they obeyed. However, the focus of this passage isn't simply the obedience of the ten lepers or even Jesus' ability to heal them. Rather, it is that one of the ten returned to worship Jesus. You see, God is faithful and good. He sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45), but our aim is not simply to obey Jesus and enjoy His blessings. We seek to respond to God's faithfulness with worship. All people are recipients of God's goodness, but very few respond to this goodness in worship. Everything we do in relation to God is in response. God always moves first because He is the creator of all things. Because of this, here is the question: what will our response be? Will we respond to God's faithfulness in humble adoration, or will we respond with sinful arrogance? Jesus is worthy of our worship!

PRAYER:

Thank God for His many blessings to you and your family. Say them out loud, and worship Him for what He has done and who He is. Ask God to strengthen your faith in Him and ask Him to continue to draw you, your family, and our church back to His feet in worship.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Everything in our lives come from God. We often forget to offer Him thanks and praise, but we should remember to always lift our eyes to the Lord and be grateful. It's also important to say thank you to important people in our lives who help us along the way.

Make it Stick

Make a thank you note to God about something your family is thankful for that He has done for you. Also, make a thank you note for a friend who has done something nice for you too!

DAY 6

APRIL 1, 2022

MARK 8:22-25

“²² And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to Him a blind man and begged Him to touch him. ²³ And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when He had spit on His eyes and laid His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴ And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.” ²⁵ Then Jesus laid His hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

Of all the miracles that Jesus performed, giving sight to the blind is one that we tend to think of the most. Whenever we see Jesus giving sight to the blind, there is a direct connection to the spiritual sight that we receive by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is clear that all of us at some point walk in this spiritual blindness before Jesus removes the scales and gives us sight to see His beautiful grace.

An interesting note about this miracle: This is the gradual miracle of Jesus that is recorded in scripture. When Jesus first touched the man’s eyes, he says that his vision is blurred. We know that Jesus could have healed this man immediately if He wanted to. So why would Jesus allow this many to be healed of his blindness gradually? Perhaps Jesus was using this as an illustration to His disciples, that spiritual blindness is typically healed gradually. Spiritual blindness is an ailment that impacts all of us. Even when God opens our eyes to salvation and the truth of the Gospel, our hearts break for those we love that still wander spiritually blind. As we continue to pray that God would open their eyes to see the truth of His love for them, we mustn’t grow discouraged when that enlightening seems gradual and slow. God is never in a hurry. Rather than grow disheartened, we should be reminded that God is faithful, and He will finish that which He has started.

PRAYER:

Thank God for giving you spiritual sight to see the goodness of the Gospel. Let us continually pray for those that we know and love that are still stumbling along in spiritual blindness and ask God that He would enlighten them to the goodness of His love for them.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

This lesson looks at the miracle of Jesus healing a man born blind, all with some saliva and special instructions. We see the marvelous miracle that take place, but we also note that we need to “see” what God does in our lives, and what He would have us do in the lives of others.

Make it Stick

Play a game of Pictionary by having the person drawing while being blindfolded. As you play the game, discuss what the blind man experienced before he was healed.

DAY 7

APRIL 2, 2022

JOHN 6:16-21

¹⁶ When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. ²⁰ But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹ Then they were glad to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Previously, we saw a similar story to this one. The disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee when a sudden storm came upon them. The difference in this story is that Jesus wasn't in the boat with them. Jesus had stayed back to pray alone leaving the disciples to undoubtedly feel as if they were left on their own. Having rowed for several miles, surely, they were tired. Weary from battling the winds and the waves, one could only wonder how much energy they had left. How much longer could they put up such a fight against the storm that had seized them?

It is in this moment, that they see Jesus walking to them on the water. The passage tells us that they were frightened. In fact, this story is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and John, and in all three accounts, the disciples are mentioned to have been greatly afraid. However, their fear quickly turned to joy and amazement as they learned that it was their Lord coming to them when they needed him the most. Once Jesus gets in the boat with them, Matthew and Mark's gospels tell us that the wind has ceased. Let's compare the two stories of Jesus calming the sea: In the first, the disciples called out to Jesus while He was already in the boat. In the second, Jesus came to the disciples from outside of the boat. In the first, Jesus showed His command of the sea by rebuking it. In the second, Jesus showed His command of the sea by walking on it. In this life, we must always remember that even when we cannot see Jesus, He is not far from us. Though the winds and waves consume us, they can't consume our Lord. Jesus sees us in our distress and when we feel we can't row anymore, He comes to us. Our salvation is based on this idea: When we needed Him most, and when we had no way of making our way to Him, Jesus came to us.

PRAYER:

Spend time in prayer thanking God that He came to you first. Thank Him for His control over the winds and the waves of this life. That even when it seems impossible, nothing can keep Jesus from reaching us. No matter the distress, Jesus conquers all to meet us where we are.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

In this miracle Jesus walks on water to meet the disciples who were in a boat and the waters became rough. At first, they were afraid when they saw Jesus out on the water. When they realized it was Him they were amazed of how He came to help them when they needed Him. Once again, we see that Jesus has all the power we need in scary situations.

Make it Stick

Draw a picture of a time that you were scared and called out to Jesus? Discuss as a family how Jesus came to you and calmed you.

DAY 8

APRIL 3, 2022

MATTHEW 13:31-32

³¹ He put another parable before them, saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³² It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

He told them another parable: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

Many scholars agree that the main idea of the Parable of the Mustard Seed is to show that the beginnings of the gospel would be small but would later increase substantially. The work of grace in the heart of the disciples and the Kingdom of God within them would later be carried on through all the nations of the world.

The gospel grows significantly in the hearts of believers; though perhaps at first not noticeable, but ultimately, it comes to full growth, great strength, and usefulness for God's Kingdom. When the gospel comes into the soul, it works a thorough, but many times a slow change, and it spreads itself into all the powers and faculties of the soul of the believer. From this parable, we learn to expect gradual, but consistent progress in our Christian life.

This understanding should lead us to pray, "God, help me to grow in grace and in holy principles and Christ-exalting habits. I commit to abide in you, Jesus, in order to receive all of the spiritual nutrients I need to grow spiritually and be fruitful for the Kingdom of Heaven and for the Glory of God."

PRAYER:

"God, help me to grow in grace and in holy principles and Christ-exalting habits. I commit to abide in You, Jesus, in order to receive all of the spiritual nutrients I need to grow spiritually and be fruitful for the Kingdom of Heaven and for the Glory of God."

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom. In today's scripture Jesus is using a mustard seed in His parable. Have you seen a mustard seed? It's tiny! It is barely a little speck. But when it is planted it can grow into a large tree or bush. This is just like our life following Jesus. When we choose to follow Him, the Holy Spirit lives inside us. Over time it grows in and through us until we can do beautiful things for God's Kingdom.

Make it Stick

Look at many types of seeds with your children and then look at what they grow in to being. Discuss ways that we can serve God's Kingdom and help it grow once the Holy Spirit lives inside of our hearts.

DAY 9

APRIL 4, 2022

LUKE 5:37-38

³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

The “new wine” here represents the teaching of Jesus in all its freshness, originality, and power, and the “wineskins” are the people who are to receive from the Master the great principles of His doctrine. Now, the teachers in Israel known as scribes and rabbis, or doctors of the Law, were tied to the old interpretation of the Law. They were hindered by traditions, sayings of the Father, elaborate ritual observances, prejudices, narrowness, and even bigotry.

Jesus would never entrust to narrow and prejudiced representatives of a worn-out religious view, new, fresh, generous doctrines. It would indeed be like pouring new wine into old, decayed, worn-out wine vessels. New wine must be deposited in new wineskins. His doctrine had to be entrusted to simple unprejudiced men, who would just receive His teaching and then pass it on pure and unadulterated to other simple, truthful souls. In order for God’s fresh wine to be used for His Glory, it must be stored in vessels that are new and fresh. Only when God recreates us, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB), “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” then we are made ready to store God’s new wine in us.

PRAYER:

Let us pray today to be freed from old, preconceived notions that do not align with God’s fresh wine, His word. Let us pray that we can be led by God in all areas of our lives, for His glory and for His Kingdom.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

When Jesus came to earth, He made all things new. Everything God had promised through the Old Testament was fulfilled. But at this time, the scribes and teachers were used teaching looking forward to Jesus. This teaching had many rituals or rules that needed to be followed to get to God. But Jesus came with a new fresh way of teaching. He did this because He is the one and only way to God. Jesus told this parable to help the people understand that He changes everything!

Make it Stick

Look for things around your house that are old and thing that are new. Discuss the differences. How does the new item look or work better than the old? Discuss ways that Jesus changed everything when He came to fulfill God’s perfect plan.

DAY 10

APRIL 5, 2022

LUKE 6:47-49

⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and does them, I will show you what he is like:
⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.
And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

As for everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on a rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed, and its destruction was complete."

Foundations for buildings need to be deep and strong to be able to withstand severe storms and even floods caused by inclement weather. It requires the expert design of an engineer to ensure that the building will be sturdy enough to endure strong winds. In life, it is not sufficient to simply listen to wise counsel. There's another step needed to benefit from that wisdom. Some listen and later go on to do exactly the contrary to the advice given. It is essential to be able to receive the information, follow the instructions given and apply them in whatever endeavor you are involved with.

When it comes to our spiritual lives, it is imperative to go to Jesus, hear His Words by reading the Bible, listen to God-honoring sermons, and then put them into practice. It is not enough to simply listen. This is the only way to be able to build our spiritual houses on the Rock. Otherwise, we will end up building on sinking sand and it will eventually collapse and be destroyed in the middle of a storm.

PRAYER:

May we pray today that God will give us the humility and determination to listen and to put into practice His Words.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Jesus is teaching that we must be strong in our faith to be able to face when things get hard in our life. He talked about a man building a house with a strong foundation. A foundation is usually under the ground where we can't see it. As followers of Jesus, we need to be reading our Bibles, memorizing verses and building a strong base to stand on when we are faced with tough things.

Make it Stick

Draw a picture of a house that is strong. Then, draw a storm going over the house. Together, search for a scripture to add to your picture that you can recall when you have a tough time in your life.

DAY 11

APRIL 6, 2022

LUKE 15:4-7

⁴ "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'

⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The parable of the Lost Sheep is one of the most beloved stories in the Bible. The story sheds light on the celebratory atmosphere in heaven when even just one sinner is found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus begins the parable by posing a question on whether or not a person would leave ninety-nine sheep unattended to go after a lost sheep. He goes on to specify that when the person finds it, he goes home with it and shares the news with friends and neighbors so they can rejoice with him.

It is important to point out the difference between the ninety-nine sheep that were safe with the one that was lost. In verse 2, Jesus was criticized by the Pharisees and the scribes saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Jesus then responds with His parable on the lost sheep. Most scholars agree that the ninety-nine sheep represent religious people that believe they do not need repentance. On the other hand, the lost sheep represents the sinner as departed from God and exposed to certain ruin if not found by the shepherd. May we always remember, Christ is serious about bringing sinners home.

PRAYER:

Today, let us pray to be used by God as we share our faith with others and therefore, point them to repentance and belief in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

It is a great time to be with other kids that believe in Jesus. But, in this parable of the Lost Sheep, Jesus is talking about his one sheep that got away. In the parable, Jesus leaves the ninety-nine others to bring back just one! In the same way, we as Jesus followers, must always be searching for the friends and family we know that do not know Jesus.

Make it Stick

Take an index card and put names of those that you know that do not know Jesus. Pray for them everyday this week. Invite them to Easter service this year!

DAY 12

APRIL 7, 2022

LUKE 5:14-16

¹⁴ And He charged him to tell no one, but “go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” ¹⁵ But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear Him and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Light is an important theme in Scripture, normally emphasizing the removal of darkness in the unfolding of biblical history and theology. The literal contrast between physical light and darkness provokes a profound metaphorical contrast between good and evil, God and evil forces, believers, and unbelievers. Jesus later declares that He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12) so that those believing in Him will no longer be in darkness (John 12:46).

Now, Jesus says in this passage that “a city on a hill cannot be hidden,” and “neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.” Obviously, it is impossible to hide a city located on a hill. However, a lamp needs to be placed strategically for it to light a room. The lamp used in a typical Palestinian home had a partially closed reservoir made of clay. It was a fairly small lamp, which gave off only a modest light; thus, to give maximum illumination it was placed on a lamp stand.

We, as Jesus’ disciples, are called to be the light of the world. We should not be hidden, through our very nature, the kingdom life within us is a living testimony to those in the world who do not yet have that light.

PRAYER:

Let us pray today that we may always remember that Jesus said that we are the light of the world and that we must shine brightly and never be covered or placed under a bowl.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

In this parable Jesus is talking about light. Light is used to make something be seen when it is dark. When we are wanting to show something to someone, we would never cover up the light. What Jesus is telling us is that when we follow Him, we need to let everyone know. We need to be His Light in our world! We can shine our light for Jesus by being loving, kind, willing to share and telling others about Him. Shine His light today!

Make it Stick

Discuss ways to shine for Jesus. Make some cookies for a neighbor, offer to do yard work for someone that could use the help. Be creative!!

DAY 13

APRIL 8, 2022

MATTHEW 7:1-5

¹Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?

⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. In today's world, it is very common to see people judging others. Social media has enabled and empowered people to be as judgmental as they have ever been. To make matters even worse, this trend seems to also be practiced among professing Christians. It is sad to say, but too often we see believers engaging in judgmental practices that should never happen.

The fact of the matter is humans have always been judgmental. This is why Jesus took this moment to talk to His listeners about this horrible problem. It is interesting to see how many times we are judging others without noticing that we may be doing the same or similar thing, or even worse. Jesus said that we would be judged with the same measure we use.

Jesus goes ahead to ask, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" It is extremely important to look at ourselves first before we go ahead and judge others. Jesus called them "hypocrites" and instructed them to take the plank out of their own eye to be able to see clearly to remove the speck from their brother's eye.

PRAYER:

May we pray today for the Holy Spirit to lead us always to assess and judge our motives, attitudes, and actions before we even consider going ahead to judge others.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

How many of you have at one time tattled on your brother or sister? We all have times that we have pointed out someone else's mistakes, but don't remember we have done not so good things ourselves. Jesus is telling us in this parable that we need to focus on ourselves and how we are acting. It is not up to us to judge others. We need to focus on living the way Jesus is teaching us. Rather than judge, let's just pray and love others.

Make it Stick

Think of five things that you can share with your brother, sister, parents, or friends that will encourage them. Tell them what you like about them. Tell them things they do well. When you think of things that are encouraging, you won't have time to judge!

DAY 14

APRIL 9, 2022

MATTHEW 13:44

44 "The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

The main topic in this parable is the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus here chooses once again to make comparisons with earthly things. Here He compares the kingdom with a hidden treasure.

The Kingdom of Heaven, also known as the Kingdom of God, is pretty much synonymous with salvation or with reconciliation with God through the work of Christ, because the Kingdom of God is the rule of God to save us, and to save us is to bring us from destruction into the enjoyment of Christ forever.

There is a special worth of having God ruling over us and, for us, and over everything else. It's not hard to see why that is so valuable. If the all-wise God is ruling over all things for our joy, everything must be working for our good, no matter how painful it may be. And in the end, God will triumph over all evil and all pain. So His Kingdom is definitely a treasure.

Pastor John Piper says, "The Kingdom of God is so valuable that losing everything on earth, but getting the Kingdom, is a happy trade-off. Having the omnipotent, saving reign of Christ in our lives is so valuable that, if we lose everything, in order to have it, it is a joyful sacrifice." Are we willing to give it all in exchange for the Kingdom of Heaven?

PRAYER:

Let us pray today for God to steer our heart's affections to the things that truly matter; the things of the Kingdom of God, and to not be attached to the things of this world that will eventually pass away with time.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

The Kingdom of God is above all else. This parable is explaining how God's Kingdom is better than anything we possess on earth. We all have many things that we enjoy and possess here on earth. But when we choose to follow Jesus, we become children of God and we belong to His Kingdom!

Make it Stick

Go through things in your house and choose things that you are willing to give up and donate. Discuss how these items are just for earthly enjoyment. Discuss how God's Kingdom is our ultimate treasure.

DAY 15

APRIL 10, 2022

MATTHEW 21:9

⁹ And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

It's Passover time in Jerusalem. The city is more crowded than usual. The messianic expectations are high. Jesus has just sent two of His disciples to find a donkey with a colt to ride into Jerusalem. This is no coincidence, nor is it accidental. Jesus is communicating something significant to His Jewish audience: Israel's king is here just as Zechariah 9:9 promised.

The crowds recognizing who Jesus is begin laying their cloaks down and laying branches down to create a red carpet for the Messiah King who has come. The crowd chants "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Hosanna means "O save." They recognize who Jesus is and, in some sense, recognize that He has come to save them.

As we begin our walk toward the cross with the beginning of Holy Week, this scene from Palm Sunday is instructive for us. Do not miss who Jesus is and why He has come. We celebrate Easter not because a good man has come or even because a good man has died. We celebrate Easter because the promised Messiah not only has come, but He has died and risen again in our place securing salvation for us!

PRAYER:

Pray today that as you would be reminded of the truth of Easter.
Pray that the Lord would allow you to see Jesus and His resurrection with new eyes.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

The waiting was over - the promised King was finally coming into Jerusalem and the people crowded the streets to cheer His arrival. But there was a problem: Jesus was not rich like a normal king. He didn't have a big fancy horse or a big fancy army to go with Him in this parade. For He had come for a bigger purpose. As we go through Holy Week, we will see that He came to be our Savior!

Make it Stick

Make palm leaves out of construction paper and glue them to a Popsicle stick. Put it on the refrigerator to remind your family that Jesus came just as God promised!

DAY 16

APRIL 11, 2022

MATTHEW 21:12-13

¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

We now come to Monday of Holy Week. The events of Palm Sunday are still fresh on the minds and the hearts of the Passover crowds in Jerusalem. With anticipation, they watch to see what Jesus will do. Jesus enters the temple and in the court of gentiles—the only place for the nations outside of Israel to meet with God—finds moneychangers who exchange money for temple currency. He finds merchants selling sacrificial animals. These “robbers” as Jesus calls them are taking advantage of the religious devotion of those who have traveled to Jerusalem for Passover.

With these actions, Jesus challenges the religious establishment. These religious leaders not only have allowed these actions but are likely benefiting from these sales. Jesus’s actions here in the temple likely secure His death sentence as He confronts the corrupt religious establishment.

As Jesus commences with His temple cleansing, He also teaches that the temple is to be a house of prayer. It is to be a place where God’s people come to meet with Him. It is to be a holy place where they come to encounter their living God. These “robbers” as Jesus calls them are corrupting what God has called Holy.

In this scene, we see Jesus’s heart for the nations. These moneychangers and merchants were preventing the nations from praying, so Jesus restores and reminds the people that the temple is a house of prayer not a place for trade. In this scene—though subtle—we see Jesus inviting us to know and be known by our faithful God.

PRAYER:

Pray that the Lord would motivate in your heart a longing for the return of Jesus and a love for the mission that He has left for us.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Jesus arrived at the temple He found people exchanging money and selling things. Jesus tells them that the temple was meant to be a house of prayer. He goes on to clean up what was happening at the temple. Jesus did not want anything to get in the way of coming close to God.

Make it Stick

Take water color paint and paint a beautiful picture. Anything that is important to you. Now, take paint and paint all over your picture. Ruin your picture. Talk about how Jesus felt when He saw the temple used in the wrong way. Talk about how Jesus can clean up things in our lives as well.

DAY 17

APRIL 12, 2022

MATTHEW 24:36

³⁶ **"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.**

"When will these things be?" This is the question the disciples ask in Matthew 24:3 concerning the end of time. After a lengthy discussion, Jesus answers in verse 36: no one knows, not the angels in heaven nor the Son of man. No one knows the day or the hour of the return of Christ and the end of the age outside of the Father.

Believers can get distracted and side-tracked by focusing too much on when Christ will return. The point of Jesus's discussion here in Matthew 24 and 25 along with the rest of the Bible's teaching is not there for us to predict when Christ will return. Instead, these things are there for us to know that He will return. God has not abandoned us. Jesus has not forgotten us. There is coming a day when the Lord Jesus Christ will return for His people. We look forward to that day, while we remember that He has called us to be faithful to His mission today.

This verse instructs us in two ways. First, we must remember that Jesus is coming back. Our lives should be shaped by eternity. We do not live for today or tomorrow. We live knowing that there is a day coming when we will be with Jesus and all the wrongs will be made right and all the hurts will be healed. Second, we remember that until that day comes, we have been given an assignment. We have been given a mission to make the Gospel known. This mission is far too important, and Jesus is far too worthy for us to lose our focus on Him and what He has called us to do.

PRAYER:

Spend time praising the Lord for His plan and His Wisdom!
Praise Him that nothing can stop Him.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Jesus is telling His disciples that they should not be concerned about when things were going to happen to Jesus. They just needed to know that what He was telling them about who He was, was true. He wanted them to focus spreading the truth about who He was and not be concerned about when He would return.

Make it Stick

At dinner, discuss ways that your family can share Jesus. Try to find a way to share about Jesus or show the love of Jesus together this week.

DAY 18

APRIL 13, 2022

MATTHEW 26:3-5

³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴ and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill Him.

⁵ But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

On Wednesday of Holy Week, the pieces begin to fall in place for the betrayal and murder of Jesus. Representatives of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body in Jerusalem, gather in the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, to plot their plan. They understand that Jesus is loved by the people. Should they arrest and kill Him, there could be a riot. Instead, they decide to wait until the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that will end on Thursday. The crowds would return to their homes away from the city and the fear of revolt would be calmed.

Their goal was to move in secret. They wanted no one to know what they had done. They wanted to keep it quiet. Yet, in God's providence what they planned to do in secret God would use to save His people as their plan would be preached around the world through many centuries and in many languages. This is a picture of what Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50:20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

You cannot stop God. You cannot outsmart Him. You cannot outmaneuver Him. The Jewish leaders believed that they were stopping the mission of Jesus. In reality, they were playing right into His hand. What many may have seen as a threat to what Jesus had come to do was exactly what God had planned.

PRAYER:

Let us pray today for God to steer our heart's affections to the things that truly matter; the things of the Kingdom of God, and to not be attached to the things of this world that will eventually pass away with time.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

The plans were starting to be in place to kill Jesus. The ruling body of Jerusalem believed they could stop God's plan. God's plans can not be stopped. Soon, Jesus was going to fulfill what God has sent Him to do. To save the world!

Make it Stick

Tonight at bedtime, pray together as a family to thank God for sending Jesus to die for your sins and for Jesus for fulfilling that plan.

DAY 19

APRIL 14, 2022

MATTHEW 26:26-29

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My Body."²⁷ And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is My Blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."

It's Thursday of Holy Week. Jesus and His disciples make their way to the room that had been prepared for the Passover meal. Each of the Gospel authors include different aspects and varying levels of details about the events and the words that were spoken during this meal. In Matthew's passage, he gives us a succinct and straight forward accounting of the Lord's Supper.

The disciples had no idea the significance of Jesus's Words or this meal. At this point, Jesus's body had not been broken nor had His blood been shed on the cross. However, Jesus was setting the stage for what the cross would mean for His people. In Exodus 24:8, God establishes the old covenant with His people Israel through the blood of sacrifices. Here, Jesus is telling His disciples—and us—that He is establishing a new covenant with a final sacrifice. Unlike the old covenant where God's people would sacrifice to atone for their sins, now, in the new covenant God will sacrifice His perfectly obedient Son for the sins of His people.

Spend a few minutes reflecting on that truth: Jesus was sacrificed so that you would not have to be. Jesus died for you. The punishment that we deserve has been given to Jesus who deserved none of it. *Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

PRAYER:

Praise God today that Jesus endured the cross in your place!
Spend time today meditating on that truth.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

When we are believers we take the Lord's Supper and we eat bread and drink juice so we can remember everything He did for us. The bread is a remembrance of His Body broken for our sins. The juice is His Blood shed for our sins. Jesus did it all for us!!

Make it Stick

Grab a cracker and a small cup of juice. Talk as a family about how the elements that we take at the Lord's Supper is a symbol of Jesus' Body and Jesus' Blood.

DAY 20

APRIL 15, 2022

MATTHEW 27:46

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

It's Good Friday. What is "good" about today? We call today "Good Friday" because today is the day that we remember and celebrate that because of the death of Jesus as the final and complete payment for our sins, our penalty is erase, our debt is forgiven, and our guilt is overcome.

In Matthew 27:46, Jesus cries out in despair, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He draws this despairing cry from Psalm 22:1. In way that is difficult for us to comprehend, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, is separated from God because He is bearing the sins of the world and enduring God's wrath as our substitute. Jesus's cry is not about the physical pain of the cross, instead it centers on the pain of being separated from God. This was something He had never experienced before and will never experience again.

This passage teaches us two important truths. First, we see the awful price that our sin demands. Our sin is so great that it took nothing less than the perfect son of God, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ—fully God and fully man—to die in our place. Second, we see that Jesus was separated from the Father so that we wouldn't have to be. Instead, when we trust in the death and resurrection of Christ as the final payment for our sins, we are brought into full fellowship with God the Father. Because Jesus endured the cross, our sins have been atoned for and our debt has been paid.

PRAYER:

Spend some time praying today that the Lord would help you to trust that He is always working.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Today we remember the day that Jesus went to the cross to die. We also celebrate because we know the end of the story. We know that Jesus had to die on the cross so that we can choose to follow Him and our sins will be forgiven!

Make it Stick

Make a picture of a cross and cut it out. Hang it in your room and remember what Jesus did for you. Make an extra and share it with a friend.

DAY 21

APRIL 16, 2022

MATTHEW 27:62-66

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while He was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' ⁶⁴ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples go and steal Him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

The gospels do not give much detail about the events of the Saturday of Holy Week. We can assume that the disciples spent Saturday hiding in fear since that is where they are found on Sunday. They had given their lives over the last three years to a man who had just been shamefully executed as a criminal. They anticipated that Jesus would establish God's messianic kingdom, instead, He lies lifeless in a borrowed tomb.

Matthew is the only gospel writer that records any activity on Saturday. The chief priests and the Pharisees ask Pilate to secure the tomb with guards. Jesus had promised to rise after three days, and they feared the disciples would try to steal His body to create a story of His resurrection.

Try as they might, the religious leaders cannot stop God's plan. In fact, their planning plays right into God's plan. The Roman soldiers guarantee that the disciples could not steal the body. In their effort to stop what God is doing, they ultimately provide support for the truth of the resurrection!

Jesus in the tomb teaches us that even when we do not see it and we cannot comprehend it, God is still working. He was working through the Roman guards stationed at the tomb. He was working in the fear of the disciples. Our God is never not up to something.

PRAYER:

Pray that God would remind you that when things seem quiet, it is when He is working the most.

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Although the Bible does not tell us much about the Saturday of the Holy Week. We can be sure that God was still working. Even when we don't see it He's working all things out for our good!

Make it Stick

As you prepare for Easter, maybe spend this day coloring Easter eggs together. Take this time to discuss ways that God is working in your life that you can not see. Get in bed early because we have lots of celebrating to do tomorrow! Sunday is coming!

EASTER

APRIL 17, 2022

MATTHEW 28:4-6

⁴ And for fear of Him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.

Happy Resurrection Day! Christ is risen! On the Sunday of Christ's resurrection, we see what good the Roman guards did to keep Jesus in the tomb. The angel of the Lord comes from heaven opening the tomb and Jesus rises again! At the appearance of the angel, the guards faint. As Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" come to the tomb they do not find Jesus. Instead, they find the angel announcing that Christ is not here, He has risen!

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. Suddenly, the two women are no longer sorrowful, they are joyful. Soon, the disciples will no longer be hiding in fear, they will be boldly declaring the good news that Jesus saves.

Jesus's resurrection does not just change everything for the disciples, it changes everything for you and me. Because Jesus is alive, our sins are forgiven. Because Jesus is alive, we have hope not just for tomorrow, but for eternity. Because Jesus is alive, death is not the end of the story. Do not let Easter Sunday pass without spending some time rejoicing in the resurrection.

PRAYER:

Praise God that Jesus is alive!
Spend time today praising the Lord that Jesus is risen and because of that, we have life!

FAMILY TABLE TALK

Hallelujah! He is Risen! Jesus rose from the grave just as He said He would! Death has been defeated. When we choose to follow Him and say He is our Savior, we can spend eternity in Heaven with Him!

Make it Stick

Celebrate as a family that we have a Risen King! Jesus!

EASTER

AT CENTRAL

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EASTER MORNING

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