

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

October 7, 2018

Day 1: Exodus 14:5-6

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed towards the people, and they said, 'What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?' **6** So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; **7** he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

Pharaoh, still not sure of his decision to let his workforce escape, decides to compound all his bad decisions by going after the Hebrews with an army. How soon people forget and go chasing after what they ought not to have.

Question: How much time do you think went by before the king decided to go after the Hebrews?

Challenge: Think of a time in your life when one bad decision led to another.

Scripture: James 4:1-11, Proverbs 3:34

Day 2: Exodus 14:9-11

9 The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his chariot drivers and his army; they overtook them camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. **10** As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. **11** They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt?'

This is the first of a series of complaints made by the freed slaves about the risks of freedom. They are convinced that the Egyptian army will kill them because there is no place to run. Their backs are against the sea and they have no boats. The Israelites complaining are saying that given a choice they would prefer to die in Egypt of old age and as slaves, rather than as a free people. How quickly they have forgotten the cost of freeing them and how God bent the powerful Pharaoh to his will. How soon we forget what God has done for us when we face new and difficult problems.

Question: If the Hebrews were so numerous, why were they afraid of the advancing army?

Challenge: See if you can find the areas spoken of in verse 9.

Scripture: Numbers 21:4-9

Day 3: Exodus 14:12-14

12 Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, "Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.' **13** But Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. **14** The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.'

The act that God is about to do will show to all the real power and glory of God. It seems that Pharaoh will use Egyptian power to destroy the Hebrews but everything is as God has planned. Pharaoh sees the slaves and he resolves to destroy them. However, it was his intention all along to get revenge on Moses and the slaves for the many losses he suffered. Moses does not answer the protesters but rather he uses the trust he has developed for God's providence to state that (he did not know exactly how) God would indeed fight for the people, they just had to watch.

Question: What did some of the Hebrews want to do?

Challenge: Between verses 13 and 14 there are at least 3 suggestions for dealing with your anxiety (don't be afraid - stand firm - keep still). Which one could you do and which one would you have the hardest time doing?

Scripture: Luke 1:30-33, Psalm 23, Matthew 14:23-33, Psalm 37:10-11

Day 4: Exodus 14:15-16

15 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. **16** But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground.'

Poor Moses. God keeps giving him orders to do something that seems impossible before he actually does it. Moses is supposed to tell the people to start walking into the sea before dry land has appeared. I often wonder who was first because I believe that the waters did not part until someone first put their foot into the sea.

Question: What two things did the people and Moses have to do before they crossed the sea?

Challenge: How would you feel if you were one of the Hebrews and your leader said to walk into the sea?

Scripture: Joshua 3

Day 5: Exodus 14:21-22

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. **22** The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

As the people walked the waters parted and formed a wall on either side of them. As long as they kept their eyes on the road ahead of them they would not fear the wall of water falling on them. Just like Peter walking on the water, as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus he would not sink, but as soon as he thought about the turbulent water he began to sink.

Question: What time of day does the sea recede and is it important?

Challenge: When was the last time you had to go forward without seeing a good ending?

Scripture: Matthew 14:23-33, John 3:1-10

Day 6: Exodus 14:23-28

23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. **24** At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. **27** So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. **28** The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.

The sad part of this encounter is what happened to the army. They followed orders and were drowned. I wonder if Pharaoh had led the way would the disaster have actually happened. Anybody can command from behind but you can only lead from in front. Like many arrogant rulers Pharaoh let others suffer the consequences of his bad decisions. People who are leaders in government and business today need to be careful before making a decision that affects the lives of those they lead.

Question: Do you think the fire was in front of the Egyptians to stall them or behind them to drive them into the sea?

Challenge: It cost the first born and most of the Egyptian army to set the Hebrews free — how much is freedom worth to you?

Scripture: Exodus 15:1-21

of Discipleship

October 14, 2018

Day 1: John 21: 2,3 2Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

When one suffers a sever loss- first there is sadness at the loss and second the loss of your future. The Disciples (unconsciously) had planned a future in the new movement with Jesus as the leader. They now are not only leaderless but without a purpose. Going back to do something they knew about was a normal response to the events of the last few days in their lives.

Question: Why do you think they went fishing?

Challenge: How do you deal with the loss of someone that means a lot to you?

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-20

Day 2 John 21:5-6

5He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. 6He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Jesus helps them to see their new ministry in a gentle manner. He shows that He is still leading them and providing the strength and wisdom for them to do their ministry. He is also reminding them that they will be fruitful if they are in Him.

Question: What do you think the disciples felt like when Jesus asked them the question about catching some fish?

Challenge: Can you think of a time when you thought God was asking you to do something that seemed like a waist of time.

Scripture: John 15:1-11

Day 3 John 21:7-9

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

God bless Peter-always jumping in the water not knowing if it is over his head. His excitement at seeing Jesus could not be contained. This is an example of team ministry. John recognizes, Peter jumps in and the others haul the fish ashore.

Question: How did Peter recognize that it was Jesus?

Challenge: How do you recognize that Jesus?

Scripture: John 20:1-10

Day 4: John 21:10

10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Breakfast is supposed to be the most important meal of the day. How much more important would it be if Jesus made breakfast and served it to you? Breakfast brings us physical relief from the night of fasting and strength for the new day. With Jesus our breakfast not only brings new strength but also hope for the day and promise of a new day in eternity.

Question: Why does Jesus ask for just some of the fish and not all?

Challenge: What talents of yours can you lay at Jesus' feet?

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Day 5: John 21:11

11Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

No one knows why the number 153 was used but it could have meant that it was a lot more than a usual or even a very large catch. I think that if Jesus gives us great success in life, that as long as we are humbler about how we were successful (God helping us) we will be able to handle what ever temptations come from being very successful.

Question: What do you think the number 153 signifies?

Challenge: How do you stay humble and grateful?

Scripture: John 21:15-17

Day 6: John 21:12-14

12Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Notice that they all knew it was the Lord in the breaking of the bread. We most fully feel the Lord's presence when we share in Jesus name. The point is not the eating but the manifestation of God's grace in bringing together people from very different walks of life in one place. We show that we are one in the Spirit when we eat the Lord's supper. It is a foretaste of the heavenly meal where all have enough and no one is left out.

Question: Why do you think Jesus kept appearing to the disciples?

Challenge: What do you see as the role of the church to make Christ appear

Scripture: Luke 24:28-35

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October 21, 2018

Day 1: Acts 8:26

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

If we are willing to serve, God will find ways we can serve. Philip is an example of the Christian that has gifts and is willing to use them. He was picked to be a deacon, to serve at distributing food to the widows and he finds himself preaching. Philip was chosen to be a deacon because he was of "good stature, full of the spirit and wisdom." He begins his ministry doing one thing but ends up doing another. In both his serving food and preaching he is doing the same thing – preaching the Gospel.

Question: When have you gone on a trip without knowing your exact destination? How did that feel?

Challenge: Why do you think God speaks (most of the time) through angels instead of with God's own voice?

Scripture: Acts 8:26-40

Day 2: Acts 8:27-28

So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.

This man was like many in the ancient world; religious but seeking to find meaning in life. The Bible is a source of hope but they are not sure where to look or how to understand what it means. Many people see the Bible as a sacred book but at the same time it is a mystery that they believe they will never understand. In fact it is true that a number of regular church going folks know little of the riches that are found in the Bible. It is not the fault of people but of us who know the scripture but do not share its contents with others.

Question: Do you know what a Eunuch is?

Challenge: If you could go to any place where Jesus walked and worshiped, where would it be and why?

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-12

Day 3: Acts 8:29-31

The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

An eunuch is not a person that a Jew would normally seek out and talk to. For someone to become a eunuch they have to mutilate their body and Jews took a dim view of any body mutilation. God chose the right person for the job of talking to the eunuch. Philip is a Greek speaking Jew and probably not originally from Jerusalem. He would be more likely to follow God's instruction to talk to the eunuch. Philip recognized the scripture the eunuch was reading and asked his question hoping to learn, as well as share his understanding. Philip is a good evangelist because he is willing to listen to the other person first before sharing. We too often do not give people the chance to share their beliefs before we give them ours. We need to be a good listener as well as a speaker.

Question: Have you ever seen anybody reading the Bible in public in the same way people might read a novel?

Challenge: Read Isaiah 53. Do you think it is talking about Jesus?

Scripture: Romans 10:13-21

Day 4: Acts 8:35-36

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

If we are willing to share the love of God we have experienced, then God will bring individuals into our lives that need to experience God's love. Philip does not know why he is going south but just goes, knowing only that God has something in mind. His experience is more like what might happen to any Christian today. Philip has not prepared a sermon for a large congregation but is simply ready to give an answer for the reason he has hope. Notice that Philip starts with the scripture.

Question: If you were choosing how you wanted to be baptized what would you choose and why? Total immersion, pouring or sprinkling? Would you like to be baptized in a river or lake instead of in a church?

Challenge: What should be required before someone is baptized?

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-6

Day 5: Acts 8:38-39

And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

After the eunuch has stated that he believes and is willing to be a follower himself, he wants to make a public declaration of his faith. When one is baptized, one is buried with Christ. If we are buried with Christ we shall also rise like Him. This is the promise that was fulfilled and verified by Jesus' resurrection. As far as we know this eunuch does go back to his old job and does not begin a great movement in Ethiopia. It was worth Philips' time for just one person.

Question: What kind of public declaration of faith have you made?

Challenge: If all the people in a town saw you baptized they would know you were a follower of Jesus. Now how would new people in town know you were a follower?

Scripture: Matthew 28:17-20

Day 6: Acts 8:40

Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

As soon as Philip's work is done he is once again on his way to a new place of ministry. We know of this one person that Philip touched and we do not know of how many others he was able to help understand the significance of Jesus to the world. He was an itinerant minister going from place to place.

Question: Do you think you would like to be a traveling preacher?

Challenge: Think about someone that you might talk to about the hope that you have in Christ.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:17-25

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October 28, 2018

Day 1: Deuteronomy 34:1

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land:

It has now been 40 years and two generations since leaving Egypt. Moses has been summoned to another Mt. to receive some instructions from God. Before God speaks Moses has some time to look carefully at the land. The land is the symbol of God's promise to Abraham - that Abraham's offspring would be like the stars of the heavens. There are times in history when we see the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. There are times when we are in the middle of a chapter. Moses has been in the beginning of God's salvation, in the middle of it, and now at its completion. Our salvation begins when we accept Christ as Lord. It continues through our life and it is complete when we join the saints above.

Question: Can you find the modern place of Mt. Nebo on a map?

Challenge: When was your mountain top experience when God showed you either the future or just a moment of hope?

Scripture: Exodus 1:1-2:22

Day 2: Deuteronomy 34:2-4

Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. The Lord said to him, ‘This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, “I will give it to your descendants”; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.’

I have always wondered if Moses was surprised at God saying, “you will not go there,” because God had him lead the people to so many strange places for so long. I believe God gave a blessing to Moses by letting him see the future. He saw not just the bare land but he saw the people he had led building homes and raising their children. He saw the people free to worship God.

Question: What is the “western sea” and what important city is not mentioned?

Challenge: Now find the various places mentioned in the verse.

Scripture: Exodus 2:23-4:17

Day 3: Deuteronomy 34:5-7

Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command. He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

The period of mourning gives people the time to move the reality of their loved one's death from their head to their heart. It gives time to say goodbye and to prepare for the future. We need to recall the parts of the person's life with other people to help us. God gives us the gift of memory so that we can take with us into the future what we need and leave behind memories that will not help us. Too many today want to “get on with it” without taking the time to really say goodbye.

Question: Why do you think such an important person's burial place is not known today?

Challenge: Think of when you had to say goodbye. What is the healthiest way to say goodbye?

Scripture: Exodus 7

Day 4: Deuteronomy 34:9

Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses.

The reason for saying goodbye is that we need to say hello to the future. We cannot look to the future by going back. The Israelites wanted to go back to slavery every time the going got very hard and scary. Life moves us to the future and we need to be reminded that God is preparing a way for us to go. Moses passes on his power to lead to Joshua. Our leadership is not successful until we pass on our power to the next person.

Question: Who in the Bible does not seem to have a father?

Challenge: How can you bless someone today?

Scripture: Exodus 11:1-12:17

Day 5: Deuteronomy 34:10

Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

Moses could see God because he approached God with a willingness to serve. He was reluctant but still willing. God only asks us to be willing, not to accumulate a bunch of skills before starting His work. God will add to our efforts to bring about His will. We are called to be faithful, not successful. It is God who is successful, not us.

Question: When did Moses see God face to face?

Challenge: Take a look at yourself and see how willing you are to serve.

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-21

Day 6: Deuteronomy 34:11-12

He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

It is Joshua who now leads the people on the final part of the journey. He gets to see and experience God's salvation being completed. It is a familiar storyline in the Bible that one does a lot of the difficult work and the next one receives the benefits. Saul worked hard all his life to secure the country and David received the benefit. John the Baptist prepared the people to hear someone else. God will give us a role to play and as long as we faithfully play that role we will be honored. I am mindful of the 11th chapter in Hebrews where the writer tells us of all those who finished their course in faith without seeing the promise (Jesus). He says how fortunate we are and how grateful we ought to be for their faithfulness. Because we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses we ought to run our portion of the race so that others coming behind us will also find life in Christ.

Question: Can you recall 5-7 of the signs that Moses did in the sight of Pharaoh and Israel?

Challenge: This week think about how God displays power today.

Scripture: Exodus 35:1-29